60
T000/URCO
Book 410
Barnard Cas
England 2001

REVELATION AND THE BIBLE:

A POPULAR EXPOSITION FOR THE TIMES

BY

REV. WILLIAM DUNCAN THOMSON, M.A.,

LOCHEND AND NEWABBEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES AND THE CONCLUSIONS OF SCIENCE."

EDINBURGH:
MACNIVEN & WALLACE.
1890.

CONTENTS.

—:o:—

PAGE

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I.

REVELATION AND ITS OBJECT.

Knowledge of the Divine revelation conveyed by means of the Bible—Distinction between revelation and its record —Revelation not the same as inspiration—Revelation and history—Revelation defined—A comparative view of the elements involved in the Bible revelation—God is the Revealed as well as the Revealer—Knowledge of God and the Old Testament—Place of this knowledge in Christ's teaching and in Paul's—The special purpose of the Divine revelation—Its special purpose and Christ—The special character of the knowledge conveyed by the revelation—Christ's view and Paul's view of this knowledge—The nature of the results the Bible is intended to produce . 15

CHAPTER II.

REVELATION AND ITS HISTORICAL ELEMENT: THE FOUR GOSPELS.

Importance of the historical element—Its place in the revelation fundamental—The revelation is pervaded by it—Its value explained—Its value as recognised by the Bible—

PAGE

The historical element and the four Gospels—The four Gospels and the historical self-manifestation of Christ—The historical element and the *words* of Christ—The Sermon on the Mount and the Parables as instances—The same element and the *doings* of Christ—The washing of the disciples' feet and the miracles as instances—The same element and the *death* of Christ—The value of His death as a revelation—The nature of the revelation conveyed in His death—It was in the *fact* of His death that the *revelation* was communicated—The fact of His death an eternal embodiment of the revelation 45

CHAPTER III.

REVELATION AND ITS HISTORICAL ELEMENT: PAUL'S EPISTLES AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

The great value of Paul's Epistles as an exposition of Christianity—They derive all their value as records of revelation from the historical element in the self-manifestation of Christ—Almost nothing said in them as to the details of Christ's earthly life—An explanation of this remarkable omission—The facts in Christ's personal history on which he dwelt and their representative character—His marvellous knowledge of those facts gained by an original and independent study of them—In this study he was aided by inspiration and the teaching of the Old Testament—The book of Revelation claims to be a Divine revelation—The revelation contained in it essentially historical—John's desire to know what would be the future of Christianity in relation to the forces of moral evil in the world—The problem solved for him in the visions recorded in the book—The salient features of the history as disclosed to him—The disclosure made to him by means of an unfolding to him of the significance of Christ's personal history as the Lamb of God 66

CHAPTER IV.

REVELATION AND ITS RECORD.

PAGE

Many difficulties disappear when the relation of the revelation to the Bible as its record is understood—Important to inquire as to the place of the record in relation to the historical element of the revelation — The record not necessary for the existence of the revelation—Necessary for its preservation in integrity and purity—It did not originate with the revelation—How it discharges its function — Illustration from Christ's resurrection—In one respect the Bible not a complete record — The superabundance of the revelation of God in history — The record preserves the revelation in order to make men acquainted with it—The way in which it makes Christ known to men guides them to Him—Christ's view of the function of the record—Well to understand the real function of the record—An illustration drawn from the primitive Christians, in particular from Paul—The lesson conveyed 83

CHAPTER V.

REVELATION AND BIBLE DISCREPANCIES.

Discrepancies not numerous—Their importance often exaggerated—This done by two opposite parties—Well to know how unimportant they are—Definition of them—Admissions as to their existence—The interests of the Bible do not require the denial of their existence—Viewed in the light of the revelation—False to assume that the Bible record is identical with the revelation — An imperfect record does not necessarily imply an imperfect revelation —Discrepancies in the record, as forms of imperfection, do not hinder the revelation in accomplishing its purposes—The record relatively perfect notwithstanding its discrepancies—A record with discrepancies may be relatively more perfect than one without them could have been. . 105

CHAPTER VI.

THE HISTORICAL ELEMENT OF REVELATION AND BIBLE DISCREPANCIES.

PAGE

The historical element the best standpoint from which to see the insignificance and harmlessness of the discrepancies—The four Gospels referred to for illustrations—The representation of Christ in the Gospels absolutely the same as it should have been, though these narratives had been entirely free from discrepancies—Some testimonies—Discrepancies and Christ's *sayings*—His words spoken by Him as One occupying a historical position—The Evangelists often differ in their report of His words—No departure from substantial truth in any of the variations—Instances cited and explained—Discrepancies and *facts* in the personal history of Christ—The credibility of the facts unshaken by them—No disagreement in the Gospels as to the occurrence or value of any fact in which revelation was embodied—Discrepancies reconciled with the *credibility* of the facts to which they are related in the narratives—Christ's resurrection enlarged upon—The discrepancies leave untouched the *revelation* embodied in the facts of Christ's personal history—This shown by various instances—The fact of Christ's resurrection a conspicuous demonstration 126

CHAPTER VII.

THE BIBLE AND ITS PHENOMENA.

The Bible viewed as a whole—Its phenomena all arise from the Divine and the human elements in it—Bible compared with man's nature and with Christ's Person—Many of its phenomena arise from its Divine and many from its human element—Due respect ought to be paid to its human as well as to its Divine features—The Divine and the human elements vanish into each other—Some general phenomena—Subject-matter—Literary aspects—Influence upon intellectual and religious culture—The Bible a record of life, action, speech, among personal beings—Various speakers and actors—All its contents not of the same value—Book of Job, &c.—Some important truths about the Bible to be found in paradoxes 158

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PERFECTION AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE AND THEIR LIMITATIONS.

PAGE

Man's nature, as composed of mind and matter, possesses contrary attributes—Contrary attributes in Christ's Person as the God-Man—Both instances applied as analogies to the Bible—Why there must be perfection in the Bible—The perfection of the revelation it contains—The record of the revelation perfect as regards its function — The record does not possess, nor did it require to possess, absolute perfection—Instances of imperfection—Its imperfections reconciled with its perfection—The sufficiency of the Bible affirmed and explained — Ways in which its sufficiency has often been abridged by orthodox theology—The sufficiency of the Bible not absolute—In what respects it is limited—It does not itself profess to give an absolutely sufficient revelation—Its insufficiency compatible with its sufficiency 181

CHAPTER IX.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE AND ITS LIMITATIONS.

Its inspiration both plenary and partial—Says little about its own inspiration—Distinguishes between the inspiration of the writers and that of the writings—The Spirit of Truth and the writers—What may be affirmed and what is unknown as to the relation between the two—Inspiration not an act of Divine dictation—The theory of Christ and Paul—Inspiration and ordinary spiritual illumination compared—Paul's inspiration—The relation of inspiration to character explained—A false theory regarding it—Various forms of inspiration in the writers—Inspiration and the special task of each writer—The two functions of inspiration—In what sense the Bible is inspired—Various applications of the designation, "The Scripture," &c.—The special necessity for inspiration—The latter limited by this necessity—The nature of the necessity explained

PAGE

—In what sense inspiration is plenary—In what respect plenary inspiration may be affirmed of the record of the revelation—Not surprising to find traces of partial inspiration in the Bible—The marks of the human element in it—It is rich in matters of information and knowledge which do not in themselves presuppose any need for inspiration—Inspiration as related to such matters—It contains many statements which do not embody revealed truth, and many others which are contrary to revealed truth—Inspiration as related respectively to such statements—Verbal inspiration—The question regarding it not of the highest importance—The writers of Scripture careful as to their use of words—How inspiration might influence their choice of words—Paul and verbal inspiration—The extent and the limitations of verbal inspiration—Universal verbal inspiration not an attribute of Scripture 205

CHAPTER X.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE BIBLE AND ITS LIMITATIONS.

Definition of infallibility as an attribute of the Bible—Protestantism and the infallibility of the Bible—Does not commit itself to universal verbal infallibility—Two different classes of Protestants and the infallibility of the Bible—In what respects it is infallible—Infallibility and the revelation, the fundamental truths, and the characteristic theme of the Bible—The Westminster Confession of Faith and the infallibility of Scripture—The question as to the limited infallibility of Scripture relates to a matter of fact—No version of the Bible in existence possesses universal verbal infallibility—Infallibility is limited by the limitations of inspiration—The phenomenon of unlimited verbal infallibility is not presented by the Bible—Conclusion . . 244

INTRODUCTION.

A GLANCE at the foregoing table of contents will show that the subject examined in this book is exactly described by the first part of the title—Revelation and the Bible. The second part of the title is a description of the method and style in which the subject is treated: the treatise aims at being a Popular Exposition for the Times.

It aims at being an *Exposition*. Throughout it is pervaded by reasoning, but arguments are cast as far as possible in the form of explanations of the various questions raised; so that these questions are dealt with not so much from the attitude of a combatant, as from that of an inquirer or a guide. More speedily and more effectually than any other method, that of exposition tends to further the interests of truth, and to win conviction on many subjects, and especially on subjects of the kind handled in this book. One of the remarkable features of Christ's method as a teacher is the way in which argument and

exposition were interblended in His words. His expositions were always solid arguments; and His arguments were always clear and enlightening expositions (*see, e.g.*, Matt. vi. 24-34). The value of this method has not been forgotten in the preparation of the present Exposition. Nor has it been forgotten that in order to be enlightening and convincing, exposition requires to be impartial, judicious, and adequately guarded in its interpretation of the facts it deals with. It is, moreover, in accordance with the expository character of the book, that it not only commits itself to certain conclusions regarding Revelation and the Bible, but makes it a point, in every instance of importance, to trace the steps by which the conclusion is arrived at. This method is required to further the objects of the book. Sometimes when conclusions concerning Revelation and the Bible are stated, apart from the grounds on which they rest, a lamentable tendency is displayed, on the part of hearers or readers, to test the merits of the conclusions by unreasonable prejudices rather than by carefully ascertained premises. In consequence of this, the truth fails to secure from many a mind the prompt and hearty acceptance due to its interests and claims. It has to wait

long for the reward of intelligent and universal conviction from those to whom it appeals. And too often its reward is not accorded to it until it has been compelled to struggle and suffer for the prize. Hence the claims and the interests of truth often require not only a declaration of conclusions, but also an indication of premises. It is not enough to announce whither it goes; it must be examined step by step along the way. Exposition is the most efficient instrumentality for the propagation of Truth.

The book, again, aims at being a *Popular* Exposition. As such, it is offered as a contribution towards the supplying of an existing need. No new field of Biblical inquiry is entered upon in any of the chapters. All the main questions dealt with have already been made matters of research and study on the part of Biblical scholars, who have published in one form or another what they had to say upon them. Moreover, the method of handling the various departments of the subject is studiously unscholastic. It avoids as far as possible the use of technical terms and of words unfamiliar to the general reader. It is not addressed to experts in Biblical learning; nor to those who have access to

scholarly treatises on the questions examined, and who have the kind and amount of learning necessary in order to derive instruction and guidance from them. It contemplates ordinary readers who are interested in the subject of Revelation and the Bible, who are in want of systematised information on the perplexing problems which spring from the subject, and who are ready to welcome from any quarter teaching fitted in any way to help them in their inquiry after truth. And in contemplating such, it seeks to be simple and plain in its style of exposition and reasoning. It makes no appeal to them on the ground of prejudice ; but it pays respect to their intelligence. It goes through a process of investigation, and seeks to take them with it along the way. At every step it is bent on securing faith from them in the Bible as the Word of God. And the kind of faith it tries to produce or to confirm is that which is built upon an intelligent apprehension of the truth concerning the Scriptures. For books to give help of this kind, there is at present a pressing need and an urgent demand. Multitudes are feeling, and many are complaining, that they have not been sufficiently instructed in matters about the Bible. They are eager for information about these

matters. They are in quest of enlightenment; and they wish to be spoken or written to in any style they can easily understand.

The results aimed at are, therefore, of a purely practical nature. These results may be somewhat more particularized. (1.) The book does not set itself to reason against hostile disbelief as to the special revelation which God, in a supernatural manner, has communicated to men, and of which the Bible is the inspired record. (2.) It is, however, one of its special objects to reconcile the discrepancies, the inaccuracies, and the other forms of imperfection found in the Bible, with the Divine character and claims of the revelation, and with the supernatural element in the facts of the history in which it was originally embodied. (3.) It is, therefore, another of its special objects to help those to accept the Bible as a book possessing Divine authority, who may be predisposed to regard it as such, but who may intellectually hesitate to commit themselves to unreserved belief in its Divine character and claims because of its human imperfections. (4.) But there are also persons of a very different class who are kept in view throughout the exposition. There are many who firmly believe in the Divine authority of the

Bible ; but who falsely imagine that its Divine character is impugned, and that its Divine claims are endangered by the assertion or admission, especially on the part of believers, that it is not absolutely free from misstatements, errors, and other faults commonly found in books written by authors uninspired. To such, explanation and guidance are offered. They are shown how unnecessary as well as how impossible it is to defend the theory of the universal verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. And that region is pointed out, and to some extent explored, within which the Divine character of Scripture in its unimpaired perfection and completeness becomes distinctly visible ; and where its Divine claims can be established on the ground of facts, of reason, and of criticism. (5.) The treatise, consequently, is intended, further, to explain the scripturalness and to defend the orthodoxy of the position of those whose faith is rooted in the Divine character and claims of the Bible; and who not only readily admit the existence of all its human errors and imperfections, but see clearly, and maintain that the admission of these is necessary in the interests of the Bible, in view of the hostile criticism to which it is now being subjected.

The book, however, has two practical aims of a wider and deeper nature than any of those now indicated. It carries in it concern for the spiritual edification, which it is the main purpose of the Bible to supply. Perplexities, doubts, and misunderstandings about the Divine character and claims of the Bible, disturbing the mind of any person or of any Church, are apt, so long as they last, to interfere with the furtherance of the edification in question. Disturbance of this kind, then, is abroad at present. The cause of spiritual edification is being hindered thereby. But good will no doubt ultimately result from it. What seems to stand in the way of such edification now, will in the end be seen to have been a clearing of the road for its advancement. This result will arise from the dissemination of more enlightened views in the popular mind regarding the Bible. And the following Exposition is an effort in the direction of that result. But it is also an effort in another direction where the interests of spiritual edification are most vitally involved. The Christian's faith is not concerned about words and statements of truth or of facts only: it is concerned about *things*. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. xi. 1). The Gospel is not a

matter of word only; it is also a matter of power (Rom. i. 16; 1 Cor. i. 24; 1 Thess. i. 5). The real, the essential Gospel as power, does not lie in the mere words of the Bible, but in the facts and in the meaning of the facts of the Divine revelation which the words report and explain. The Bible itself, in its definition of faith, connects faith with the things that its words are about. Those things are the unseen and eternal things of God as revealed in Christ. It is in the things of the Divine revelation that the power of the Bible is embodied. It is in those things that God in Christ most immediately meets with the believing mind. Here the Divine revelation shines in its boundless significance. Here is the seat of its living and life-giving power. And the following chapters have been written for the furtherance of this great practical, spiritual, endlessly fruitful truth.

Lastly; this Exposition is *For the Times.* It has regard to the great interest at present existing among a vast number of intelligent Christians in questions about the Bible. This interest is one of the happy signs of the times. It is not only wide in its extent; it is imbued with the spirit of earnestness, and in many instances ap-

pears in an attitude of inquiry. There are indeed some things incidental to it meanwhile, which are much to be regretted. All who display the interest do not see eye to eye. In certain quarters it has given rise to various modes of agitation. And during the course of the agitation it has been glaringly shown how widely and how unfortunately many ministers and many laymen are divided among themselves over questions about the Bible. In some instances the divisions have sprung up in the same Church, and in the same congregation. The temper and attitude of mind revealed by the agitation have not everywhere been those best adapted to the settlement of the kind of questions in dispute. There have been revelations of unjustifiable fears, of strong and unbending prejudice, of astonishing misunderstandings, of a surprising lack of sufficient information on matters bearing upon the questions at issue. Still, notwithstanding such unhappy circumstances, the fresh and widespread interest in the questions concerned, is in itself a thing to be hailed with thankfulness. The interest is not a matter to be dreaded, as many earnest and devoted Christian people seem to think. What it needs rather is fostering and guidance. The

right thing to do, is to feed it with information; to fortify it with instruction; to keep it in life and vigour until, as far as possible, all questions about the Bible have been settled upon a satisfactory and lasting basis.

It is in connection with all this, then, that this little book, however unworthy of its aims, is intended to be helpful to the common people.

But before concluding, it may be well to explain one important matter connected with the subject of this Popular Exposition and the objects it has in view. It may be asked, Why have all questions about the Bible not been settled long ago? It is because a satisfactory basis for the permanent settlement of them has never yet been adequately provided for them, and laid in the general Christian mind. This is why the same questions have again and again reappeared, after longer or shorter intervals, as matters of controversy, and why we have them still with us as matters of dispute. And the great promise contained in the interest in those questions now abroad is, that it will help to hasten on that final and satisfactory settlement of them which the interests of the Bible and of Christian faith and edification demand.

The kind of settlement needed for those

questions, and which alone can prove satisfactory and lasting, is determined by the nature of the spirit and aims of modern inquiry. It is the distinctive characteristic of the typical modern inquirer to push his way as far as possible into the presence of the facts with which he deals, to make himself intimately acquainted with them, to penetrate into their real significance, and to be satisfied only with such conclusions regarding them as correspond to ascertained realities. Only such conclusions he recognises as the truth. This method of inquiry is one of the greatest gifts of God to the age. And this is the method by which questions about the Bible must now be settled. They can never be permanently settled in any other way. The method of inquiry is God's own gift. He has bestowed it to be applied in the quest for truth in every department of human knowledge. And it is both a recognition of His goodness and an act of justice to the Bible, to apply the method in the settlement of questions respecting the Divine revelation and its record.

If the method had been adequately applied centuries ago, so long ago the questions would have been settled. But it has been given to the present age, as never before to any other,

to apply the method to them; to subject the Bible, in other words, to a process of historical, scientific, and critical investigation; to seek to know and justly to estimate the value of all the facts that can be ascertained regarding it; and to decide upon the merits of its character and claims in accordance with indisputable results.

So it is happening to the Bible in the present day. And few things better have happened to it during the course of its history. From the application to it of the method of modern inquiry, it has lost nothing but gained much. As the result of this method, knowledge about it has been immensely increased, multitudes have been helped to feel how alive it is with truth, and how full it is of the presence of God; it has grown richer as a source of spiritual instruction; its spirit has been gaining liberation from its letter; its power of resistance to attacks from its enemies has received many fresh and strong supports. And that which has been is that which shall be. Increasingly all who love the Bible will come to know all that can be ascertained regarding it. Views of its history, its inspiration, its infallibility, &c., will be fixed in accordance with facts, and with an honest and judicious inter-

pretation of facts. Such views will become the possession of the general Christian mind. They will take root there as settled and intelligent convictions. This is the direction in which agitations and discussions concerning the Bible are tending. The movement is not a "down-grade," but an upgrade one. It is the Word of the Lord making free course for itself, in order that it may be glorified.

CHAPTER I.

REVELATION AND ITS OBJECT.

Preliminary Distinctions.

It is sometimes asked whether the Bible is the Divine revelation or whether it contains it. From the point of view of the revelation this question is not of any practical moment; so long as it is admitted that the revelation, as we are in possession of it, is sufficient for the ends it contemplates. Taken in a loose sense both descriptions of the Bible may be regarded as true. But it would be more strictly true to say that the Bible is related to the revelation as its written medium. It is the revelation, or it contains the revelation, in the sense that it records the history of the revelation, and gives all the information we need, and explains to us all it is necessary for us to know, regarding matters which form the subject of the Divine communication.

In order to gain a clear conception of the Divine revelation, we must accept and under-

stand the distinction that has been made between it and the Bible as its record. In one sense the two as they have come down to us are one ; just as the living body and the living soul constitute one man. But just, on the other hand, as we have to make the distinction between the soul and the body, in order to form a true conception of the man, so we require to make the distinction between the revelation and its record, in order to arrive at the truth about the Bible. This distinction, it should be understood, possesses great value as a point of defence for the Bible as the Word of God. There is no support in it either for sceptical or rationalistic views of Scripture. But there is much support in it for the views of all believers in a special revelation, supernaturally communicated by God. To refuse to acknowledge the distinction, or to undervalue its importance, is to leave a weapon in the hands of those who deny that such a revelation ever has been given.

The distinction in question is not by any means a novelty. It seems to have been present to the minds of those who drew up the article on Scripture in the Westminster Confession of Faith. They believed that the revelation existed before the record. And so they said, " It pleased the

Lord at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself . . . and *afterwards* . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing." But in drawing the distinction Richard Baxter was much more explicit. On one side he put "the subject-matter of Scripture, or the doctrine which it contains;" and on the other, he put "the words or writings containing or expressing this doctrine;" adding, "the one is as the blood, the other as the veins in which it runs."[1] In more recent times, however, the value of this distinction has grown into wider recognition. It is seen by many of the leading students of the Bible that the distinction must be observed. One writer, for example, says, "To understand precisely what our Bible is, we must apprehend the distinction between these two things, God's revelation of Himself, and the narrative or record of that revelation in the Bible."[2] And another writer, explaining the advantages arising from the distinction, says, "If once we get it into our mind that Revelation is one thing, Scripture another, though closely related, thing, being in truth its record, interpretation, and reflection, it will help to make us independent of questions concerning

[1] "Saints' Rest."

[2] "Revelation and Inspiration." Marcus Dods, D.D.

dates of books."[1] About the importance of the distinction thus made, there is much to be said. But an occasion for dwelling more fully upon it will arise further on. Meanwhile notice has been taken of it because it will give us some help in answering the question, What is revelation?

It will help us in the same direction if we also note, in passing, the difference between revelation and inspiration. Both revelation and inspiration are the result of Divine action. The object of both is to impart to man the knowledge of Divine things. Both seek the same practical outcome from this knowledge, in man's heart and life. And both the act of revelation and the act of inspiration on the part of God could occur without the knowledge received by man being committed to writing. Yet in some important respects the one act is different from the other. There might be revelation without inspiration. The death of Christ, for instance, was a revelation of God's holy love. It was this in its simple character as a fact. And the entire revelation was in the fact quite independently of the apprehension of its meaning on the part of any human being. Nor could anything whatsoever, happening in the mind of any apostle or

[1] "The Chief End of Revelation." Alex. B. Bruce, D.D.

of any other person, take from or add to or modify in any way the revelation which the fact embodied. The revelation was there whether men were able or not to apprehend the meaning of the fact. Inspiration, on the other hand, was that which enabled men, like Paul, to understand the fact, to see the revelation of God's holy love embodied in it. In His act of revelation, God unveils that which He desires men to know; in His act of inspiration, He opens the eyes of men's minds to see that which He has unveiled. Moreover, the act of revelation and the act of inspiration might not take place at one and the same time. There was a revelation conveyed in the fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead; but it was a considerable time after the event until Paul was inspired to see its significance and its bearings upon human destiny. In defining revelation, therefore, inspiration may for the present be left out of account, and dealt with in another connection.

Revelation Defined.

To understand what revelation is, we must look at it from the standpoint of history. The

Divine revelation, of which the Bible is the record, is the result of Divine movement in human life and history. The historical element entered into the very essence and structure of the revelation; and it remains for ever one of its salient and imperishable characteristics. A Divine revelation presupposes a direct spiritual relation between God and man. In revealing Himself, God approaches man and enters within the sphere of his life. "A direct, unambiguous revelation can be found only in the world of spirit, of the word, of conscience, of freedom, in other words, of history. Revelation and history are, therefore, not to be separated. There must be within profane history a sacred history in which God reveals Himself."[1] "The God revealed in the Bible," says another writer, "is the real God; not an abstract conception of theology, but the living God; the God with whom we have to do daily in our bodily, mental, moral, and spiritual life. What the Bible discloses to us is His actual dealing with us in our actual life, not a God in some non-secular sphere, clean away and apart from our ordinary existence. The supernatural action of God, depicted in the Bible, is but His ordinary action, made visible and articulate in the lives and hearts of men."[2]

[1] Martensen. [2] Elmslie.

Revelation signifies a Divine self-manifestation. But God is self-manifested in the works of creation, and in the ordinary dispensations of His providence. He is self-manifested within the domain of secular history. But the Bible revelation has a special character. It has four distinctive features, which separate it from the ordinary forms of the Divine self-manifestation. (1.) It was communicated throughout the course of a sacred history. (2.) The history of its communication was distinguished by special supernatural activity on the part of God among men. (3.) It was communicated for a special purpose, which other forms of the Divine self-manifestation were unable to serve. (4.) And, lastly, men were raised up, and aided by Divine inspiration, to apprehend the Divine revelation, and in various forms to record it in the sacred Scriptures. This last feature, indeed, is not a feature of the actual revelation itself; for, as we have seen, the record is to be distinguished from the revelation. But the revelation has been transmitted to us in the record, and we must practically include the record in our definition.

The Main Elements of the Revelation Compared.

Perhaps the best way to define revelation for the purposes of exposition, will be to adopt the following division of the subject:—First, Revelation and its object; second, Revelation and its historical element; and third, Revelation and its record. We shall examine each of these parts of the subject separately. But before doing so, it may be well to glance at them by way of comparison.

They may be compared in various ways. The object revealed is God. He is both the Revealer and the Revealed. It is important and obvious, then, to observe that there is far more in the self-revealing God than the facts in which He has sought to reveal Himself, were capable of embodying and unveiling. By means of these facts He has conveyed a true revelation of Himself to men, and such as is sufficient to meet all their spiritual necessities. But God is infinite, and history, even sacred history, is like the heavens—it cannot contain Him: that is to say, He cannot bring the entire meaning of His existence and life within the facts of history, so as to place their whole significance within the reach of finite comprehension. There is more in the self-revealing

God than is made manifest in the facts of both ordinary and supernatural history. And so also, on the other hand, there is more meaning in the facts of the sacred history, in the death and in the resurrection of Christ, for example, than any record of the facts and any written interpretation of the facts are able to reproduce and explain. Even the simplest facts of an ordinary kind have in them more significance than any form of spoken or written words can express. It is beyond the power of man to put down in written words all the meaning directly and indirectly signified by a process of thought, or by a sensation, or by the twinkle of an eye. And much less was it possible for even the New Testament, say, to record all the fulness and richness of meaning which the act of Divine revelation embodied in Christ's death and resurrection.

But there is another way in which the three elements of the revelation may be compared. And the truth which comes into view here is one which cannot be too much emphasised. The record of the revelation exists, and has been given for the sake of the facts which it narrates and explains. The object of the record is to bring us to the knowledge of the facts and their significance. It is the facts and their

significance which give to the Bible its value. And it is to the knowledge of the facts and their meaning that the Bible and the teaching of the Spirit of Truth is ever seeking to lead us on. But this is not all. The facts and their meaning are given to us for a higher end. As the object of the record is to lead us to a knowledge of the facts and their meaning; so in its turn the knowledge of the facts and their meaning is designed to lead us to the knowledge of the personal self-revealing God, and to a life of fellowship with Him. The method of the revelation is to lead us from the knowledge of the record to the knowledge of the facts, and from the knowledge of the facts to the knowledge of God, whom to know is eternal life.

One other instructive comparison remains to be indicated. The self-revealing God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. He is absolute truth, and His self-revelation is absolutely free from error. Moreover, the revelation of God in the facts, movements, and events of history must have been entirely free from error too. It could not be otherwise. Error might find its way into a narrative of facts, or into an exposition of their meaning. But in facts themselves no error can exist. As a thing happens, so

it must be. And so with the facts which make up the entire history of the Divine revelation. They all came to pass. There was truth, and nothing but truth in each of them, in the order in which they occurred, and in their adaptations and relations to one another. But what is thus true of the self-revealing God and of the facts in which He revealed Himself, may not be true in every respect also of the record of the facts in all its statements on matters of circumstantial and incidental detail. Whether it is or is not true of the record also, we shall see hereafter. At present it suffices to say that whatever errors or discrepancies may be found in the record, they are such as leave the revelation as given in the sacred history quite unaffected. But this will become sufficiently apparent as we inquire further into the three elements of the revelation, which we have now been comparing.

The Object of the Revelation: God.

The object of the revelation first calls for attention. Here two things fall to be considered; two distinct questions have to be answered: What disclosure does the revelation make? and, For what special end has the revelation

been given? The answer to the first question makes us acquainted with the object of the revelation as regards God; the answer to the second question acquaints us with its object as regards man.

We have to observe, then, in the first place, that the design of the revelation was to impart to man a correct and practically adequate idea of God. The revelation is from God and it is God Himself who is revealed thereby. He is the Revealed as well as the Revealer. And this double character in which God is presented by the revelation extends to every part of the latter. This truth is perfectly familiar to all who believe in the revelation, and have given to it intelligent consideration. Yet it is a truth of such vast importance and so intensely practical in regard to matters spiritual, that it requires to be much insisted upon and strongly emphasised. God has given us a revelation, and what, in the first place, He has revealed, is Himself; not merely some abstract truths about Himself; but Himself as the Living God; as an object of knowledge; as a Person to be trusted and loved by us; as the God in whom we live and move and have our being; as our Father in heaven, loving us with holy and gracious love, in whose favour is life,

and with whom it is the destiny and the privilege of His children to live in fellowship.

In the Old Testament Scriptures, the value of the knowledge of God as self-revealed is fully insisted upon, especially by the Prophets, who spoke for God to men. "God desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings" (Hos. vi. 6). In this view all the Prophets concurred. It was one of the fundamentals or essentials of the prophetic orthodoxy. No belief had a stronger hold of the minds of the Prophets than this, that the happiness of God's people depended upon the knowledge of Him more than upon anything else. His people needed this knowledge. It was a blessing to them to realise the pre-eminent value of it. It was life to them to be faithful to it. And when the Prophets looked forward to the golden age, they thought of it as a time when "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxxi. 34).

But passing from the Prophets, let us come to Christ. The idea of God as self-revealing and as self-revealed may be said to have been the most

fundamental idea of God in the mind of Christ, in connection with His personal appearance and His mission in the world. This idea was the root of all His other thoughts. It stamped itself upon the entire body of His teaching. All His works had reference to it. It told upon everything inward and outward in His manner of life; upon the way in which He met His death; and upon the obligations, the counsels, the consolations, and the hopes that He left behind Him for His disciples. He was in the Father and the Father was in Him (John xvii. 2). To see Him was to see the Father (xiv. 9). This He Himself felt and declared; and He felt that as regards the Godward side of His work, its one grand object was to let men see what God is. It was given to Him to glorify the Father upon the earth, by manifesting His name; and when He had accomplished this task, He felt that His work was done (xvii. 4, 6).

It is instructive to note the fact, that the thought of God, as revealed by Him, entirely filled His mind the night before He died. To John xiv.-xvii. we are indebted for the knowledge of this fact. And the reason why the thought was uppermost in His mind, when His life was in the midst of its great and final crisis,

must have been that the same thought was present in His life all through, as a supreme influence and a constant guide. That it was so, we have many evidences in matters of detail. But this one instance will suffice—His utterance, as in the midst of disappointment and seeming failure, He contemplated the close of His mission and work in Galilee: "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27). While, however, the grand object of His life and work was to reveal the Father, He did not make this a subject of constant proclamation. His way rather was to live in fellowship with the Father, and to let the Father, who dwelt in Him, speak through Him and work through Him, that in this more effectual way the Divine manifestation might be given.

When, again, we turn to the teaching of the Apostles we find the same transcendent importance attached to the idea now before us. Especially is it so in the teaching of Paul and of John. It will be enough to take the testimony of the former. The idea of Divine revelation, as supremely characteristic of the entire Divine movement represented by the historical

appearance of Christ, took complete possession of the Apostle's mind, and was fundamental in his teaching. His teaching was flooded with the light of the idea of God as revealed in Christ. That was the happiest day of his life, as he doubtless would have declared, on which God revealed His Son in him (Gal. i. 15, 16). He counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord (Phil. iii. 8). His message as a preacher he spoke of as "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. iv. 4). To describe the inward effect of the Gospel, he used the words: "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (iv. 6). And here is one of his summaries of fundamental Christian truth: "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God, manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. iii. 16).

But this part of our exposition may here end. Enough has been said to show that the idea of the revelation of God to man is an ever-present and all-persuasive thought in the Bible. And

the most Christian form of teaching has ever been that in which this idea has held a fundamental place and given character to the teacher's entire message. God revealing Himself to man is the root element in Scripture. And this element has borne much precious fruit in the best devotional literature, in the most inspired hymns, and in the most spiritual prayers of the Christian Church.

Only one word more remains to be added. Whether or not the Bible revelation is perfect, sufficient, and infallible, must to a large extent be determined by the view of God it presents to us. And this is one of the main reasons why it immensely concerns us to know, not only that God is the Revealer, but also that He is the Revealed.

The Object of the Revelation: Its Special Purpose.

The second question already indicated requires now to be considered. What is the special purpose of the revelation? Upon the answer to this question, also, much depends as to the merits of the revelation. It supplies a test of what its merits really are. And a great point is gained in favour of the revelation, when

it is seen that there is a perfect adaptation between it and the special purpose for which God has revealed Himself.

The chief end of the revelation in regard to man is identical with that of the Bible. The revelation seeks, and the Bible as its record seeks, to convey to man a true and adequate knowledge of God; adequate, that is, as to all the spiritual and practical ends for which the revelation has been provided. To specify and explain, therefore, the special purpose of the Bible is entirely the same as to define the special purpose of the revelation.

The substance of this purpose was expressed in our Lord's words when He said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). By means of the revelation man obtains the knowledge of God; and in this knowledge, as an inward, spiritual, possession, he finds a life of fellowship with Him. It was in order to bring man into this life, that God revealed Himself. And this special purpose, along with God's own character as a spiritual being, determined both the nature of the revelation and the method in which it was communicated. The revelation has regard to all

the spiritual necessities of man's existence and life. Men are spiritual beings, and as such are related both to God and to one another; and it is mainly from this standpoint that they are contemplated by the self-revealing God. Their spiritual necessities do not all spring out of their condition as sinners. Apart altogether from sin, there are universal and eternal spiritual necessities in human nature. It is not sin that has created the need for the possession and the enjoyment of God in every human life. The need exists there quite independently of sin, because God made man for a life of fellowship with Himself.

But men are sinners, and great spiritual necessities have sprung out of the condition of moral depravity and guilt into which they have fallen. And these necessities, also, required to be, and indeed have been, contemplated by the God of revelation. And, therefore, He has revealed Himself as the God of holy and gracious love—the God of salvation; who, in carrying out His purpose of manifold wisdom, abundantly provides for all the spiritual necessities of human existence and life; both those which are accidental to men in consequence of sin and those which are essential to humanity.

The Bible defines its own special purpose; and we learn from it that this purpose is the same alike in the Old Testament and in the New. The purpose is spoken of sometimes as salvation, and sometimes as eternal life. But both definitions of it are practically the same in meaning. Salvation in its complete sense,—salvation not only as a blessing provided for man, but also as a blessing personally appropriated and experienced by him,—is eternal life. Eternal life is salvation in personal and spiritual fruition. Such, then, is the special purpose of the Bible. Such is the special purpose of the Old Testament Scriptures. It was to them that Christ alluded when He said: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John v. 39). And it was to them also that Paul alluded when he wrote to Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15). And such also is the special purpose of the New Testament Scriptures. There is, indeed, no passage contained in them in which any special purpose, common to them all alike, is expressly asserted.

But this is precisely what should have been expected. The various and numerous writings of the New Testament came into existence independently of each other. Each of them had a special occasion for its own existence, and each of them had a special purpose of its own to serve. Some of them came into existence in places and at times considerably apart from each other. And so, it was only after the Canon of the New Testament was completed, and only in some other writing, that any statement of the special purpose of the whole of this part of the Canon could be formulated. But notwithstanding this, the saving purpose of the Divine revelation is stamped upon every page of the New Testament. And to the whole of it the words of John at the close of his Gospel may be applied, as strictly appropriate: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ; and that believing, ye might have life through His name."

The Special Purpose of the Revelation and Christ.

In all the three passages now quoted as instances of the special purpose of the Bible, this purpose, it will be observed, is connected with Christ and His place in the Bible,—that

is, in the Divine revelation. The Scriptures testify of Christ,—make wise unto salvation through faith in Him,—have been written that we might have life through believing in His name. The self-revealed God has been manifested in Him. It is eternal life to know God as revealed in Him. He is the Incarnate Word, the Personal Truth, to whom the entire Bible testifies and by reference to whom the entire revelation contained in the Bible is to be explained. In Him and by Him God has spoken from heaven. He is the sum, the substance, the effulgence, the glory of the Divine utterance to man. To know Him fully is to know all that which is essential in the written Word: for in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. To see Him is to see God; and to see God in Him is to have the light of life. "God," said Tauler, "has never spoken more than one word, and that word is still unspoken. That word is Christ." The Divine revelation is not many broken lights but one perfect all-sufficient light. But in Christ there is more light than men have yet seen. Objectively—in His self-manifestation in history—He is the Word of God completely spoken. But subjectively—in relation to men's knowledge of Him—He is the Word of

God partially unspoken; yet ever being spoken more and more, syllable after syllable, endlessly.

The Revelation and the Special Character of the Knowledge it Conveys.

In connection with the object of the revelation, the important question arises as to the special character of the knowledge it is intended to convey. To this question the Bible has its own answer to give; an answer which is both sufficiently full and explicit. The Bible does not undertake to communicate knowledge on all kinds of subjects. It is, for example, silent from its first to its last word on the metaphysical significance of the universe. It is as little intended and fitted to be a text-book on matters of science as is "Paradise Lost." It has its own special subject. It is an authority, an infallible authority, on one kind of knowledge only—that knowledge of God, of Christ, of the Divine mind and will, which is relevant to the special purpose of the revelation.

The knowledge in question is spiritual, and such as has relation to all man's spiritual needs for time and for eternity. No teacher has a better right to instruct us as to the nature of

this knowledge than Christ Himself. According to Him, it is that kind of knowledge which the Spirit of Truth imparts (John xvi. 13-15). It implies the possession of more than information about facts; and more than the belief that certain statements of truth are trustworthy. It is an inward light, a real seeing less or more distinctly and fully, on the part of the mind, into the meaning of the facts of the Divine revelation. What the eyes of the mind are opened by the Spirit of Truth to see, and what they do see, Christ called things (τὰ). To know the truth of the revelation is not a mere matter of hearing the words, or of reading the words, or of believing the words of the Bible; but it is a matter of spiritual insight, of spiritual apprehension—a matter of seeing things: things, realities, spiritual, Divine, eternal realities; not such realities of the natural world as may be revealed to us through the senses; but those realities of the spiritual world,—those things of the Divine mind, will, purpose, ways,—which the Spirit of Truth reveals inwardly to the soul. More definitely; the things seen, and the apprehension of which is the knowledge of the Divine revelation, are the things of Christ, which are also the things of the Father. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and

show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I that He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." Things. Not one thing, but many. For there are many things—many things of God, of Christ, of the Spirit. The One Eternal Light has many rays. The One Eternal Word has many meanings.

The next highest authority on the nature of this knowledge we may take to be Paul. He comes next to Christ, at any rate, in the matter of definition. He made this subject a very special study. His conception of Divine revelation formed a large proportion of the substance of his Gospel. And his theory is contained in 1 Cor. ii. 9-16. Divine revelation and the special kind of knowledge which springs from it, form the subject of the whole passage. According to him, also, the knowledge conveyed by the revelation is purely and entirely spiritual in its nature. A special Divine revelation is required to render this knowledge possible. The things revealed are things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." They are things such as the natural man can neither receive nor know. They are revealed to those alone in whom the powers of spiritual insight and discernment have been awakened,

and in whose condition of mind there is a disposition in affinity with the truth. And even to such they are not revealed unless by the Spirit of God. The Divine Spirit alone knows the things of God; and His special function it is to reveal those things to the soul—those spiritual and eternal realities which God has prepared for them that love Him, and which are subjects of knowledge to the spiritually enlightened even now.

Such are some of Paul's leading thoughts regarding the knowledge of Divine things, and the revelation by means of which it is communicated. And when we compare his thoughts with those of Christ on the same subject, we are struck with the entire substantial sameness between the teaching of the former and that of the latter. Moreover, the teaching of the two was absolutely the same on another point of unspeakable importance. The things of Christ are the things of the Father. In the knowledge of the things of Christ is given to us the knowledge of the things of God. So we have learnt from the lips of Christ; and so we learn also from the pen of Paul. In the view of the latter, Christ is the image of God, and that which is revealed in the face of Christ is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (2 Cor. iv. 4-6). But it is to be observed,

that when Paul in such terms wrote of God as revealed in Christ, he did this as one who had mastered the meaning of the Incarnation, the import of Christ's earthly organic existence and life, the significance of all the historical conditions under which He had become self-manifested. He wrote as one who had made the discovery that the spiritual oneness between the Father and Christ formed the eternal essence of the self-manifestation of the latter. And therefore he said, "Yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more" (2 Cor. v. 16). To know God as revealed in Christ, is to know Christ after the Spirit. And to know Christ after the Spirit, is to know the spiritual characteristics and meaning of His personality, of His life, of His purpose and work, and of His mind. Hence, it is to be emphasised as a special and salient feature of the Divine revelation, that it is essentially a revelation of spiritual realities, of spiritual truth rooted in Divine and eternal things.

But our exposition of the special character of the knowledge conveyed by the Divine revelation would be incomplete if it ended here. It has further to be observed, that as all the special knowledge in question is spiritual in its nature,

so it is all intended and fitted to be practical in its results.

The grand practical result it aims at is, in a word, salvation and eternal life. But here again we must have recourse to analysis for help. The practical results aimed at by the revelation of God in Christ are to be learned from the Bible; and on this part of our subject also the Bible is perfectly explicit. Here it will be sufficient for our purpose to glance at 2 Tim. iii. 15-17. In this passage Paul mentions two of the attributes of the Scriptures, their sacredness and their inspiration. But what we have at present to attend to, is what he says about their function. The passage may be taken as Paul's dying testimony to the value of the Bible. It occurs in the last writing we have from his pen. It was within a few months after the Epistle was written that he received the martyr's crown; and he knew at the time he wrote it that he was ready to be offered. Let us learn from this Apostle, then, wherein lies the practical value of the Bible—the whole Bible; for though, as we have seen, his words had reference to the Scriptures of the Old Testament only, we are justified in regarding what he said about them as entirely true also of the New Testament Canon.

According to the passage before us, the Bible is able to make wise unto salvation. With respect to this practical result, it is a teacher, a guide, a moral influence, a spiritual power. And as a power to make wise unto salvation its utility is plenary. It clearly defines all the spiritual and practical ends it aims at, and it clearly defines the way by which those ends may be attained. It teaches us all we require to know of God as revealed in Christ. We may learn from it all we need to know of Christ in His relation to God and to us as the Saviour. It is able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. It informs us as to all we need to know about Christ as the Saviour; it explains to us all we require to understand about Him and His work as the Saviour; and it fully and clearly shows the way by which salvation may become a fact in our life and experience. Moreover, man's need of salvation, the value of this blessing, and the reasons why the blessing should be sought and accepted, are all matters as to which the Bible is able to make us wise. Therefore Paul said to Timothy, "Thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

But the intensely practical character of the results aimed at by the special knowledge contained in the Bible is still more apparent in the remaining portion of Paul's definition of its office. "All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The main office of the Bible, that is to say, is doctrinal. The doctrines it contains are not the dogmas of speculation, but practical truths bearing upon human character and conduct. They are doctrines fitted to show men where they go wrong in their life and actions with respect to God and to one another. They are doctrines fitted to show them what they must be and do if they would live correctly in regard to the Godward and manward directions of their conduct. They are doctrines fitted to instruct them and to build them up in righteousness. They are doctrines fitted to make them like God in being good, and like God in doing good.

And it is by these doctrines, which constitute the special knowledge contained in the Bible, that the attributes of the Scriptures are to be tested—their perfection, sufficiency, inspiration, and infallibility.

CHAPTER II.

REVELATION AND ITS HISTORICAL ELEMENT: THE FOUR GOSPELS.

We have now seen what is the object of the revelation. God has revealed Himself to man, that the latter might know Him and find in this knowledge eternal life. The next great question that arises has regard to the way in which the revelation has been communicated. And this brings us to consider, by itself, the second element in the revelation, viz., the historical one, of which slight notice was taken in the previous chapter. This element is one of immense importance, and the object we have in view is to try to indicate and explain its place and the value of its place in the revelation. It is within the region of this element, if anywhere, that a solution of some of the difficulties existing in certain minds about the Bible is to be found. For one thing, in the light of the place which this element occupies in the revelation, and in the light of its value, the difficulties presented by the discrepancies or errors in the record of the

revelation entirely disappear. But this is not the only gain, nor is it the highest gain, to be found by a study of this element and by a correct apprehension of its significance.

The Reality and the Extent of the Historical Element in the Bible.

At the outset, it requires to be noted that the element of history—of facts and of the interpretation and application of facts—fills a fundamental place in the revelation. God has revealed Himself in His movements within the sphere of the sacred Bible history; and it is in these movements as modes of Divine self-manifestation that the essential Bible revelation has been given for all men and for all time. It is in these movements that the entire revelation in one way or another lies ultimately embodied. "Revelation has great thoughts, with which it proposes to take possession of us; yet God, in revealing, is seen approaching man, not on the plane of ideas, but, as one has said, on the plane of fact. Facts, events, transactions — these form the foundations, these supply the framework, these embody the relation between God and man. Out of these the doctrines are seen rising and spring-

ing, shedding light back indeed on the practical situation, but themselves understood by a reference to it. And all along the *doings* of the Lord and His dealings with men form the practical root out of which all grows. So it is in Genesis, and so it is right onwards." [1]

Another noteworthy and significant fact is, that this historical element is much more pervasive in the Bible revelation than at first sight appears, and than many seem to have observed. The words just quoted in regard to this element, "so is it in Genesis and so is it right onwards," are quite free from exaggeration; they are strictly true. It is not in the so-called historical books of the Bible alone, that this element has a place and plays an essential part. The whole Bible is pervaded by it from beginning to end. The entire subject-matter of the Bible is rooted in it. It enters everywhere into the substance and structure of the revelation of which the Bible is the record, It is so, for instance, with respect to the prophetic as well as with respect to the historical portions of the Old Testament. "The original Divine communications, the utterances of prophetic men, arose out of historical situations,

[1] "The Bible and Criticism," p. 53. Principal Rainy, D.D.

in connection with which their meaning and force are mostly truly understood."[1] This becomes apparent at once on an intelligent study of the prophetic Scriptures. And, indeed, the revelations of which these writings are the record, can be correctly and fully apprehended by us only in so far as we succeed in realising the nature, and in understanding the meaning, of the various historical situations from which the writings sprang. And as with the Old Testament Scriptures, so with the New. It is the historical element in these Scriptures that forms the substance of the revelations recorded therein, all through from Matthew to Revelation. It is manifestly so in regard to the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. But we shall see that it is no less really so, for instance, in the Epistles of Paul and in the Book of Revelation. What are the actual facts in connection with which and by means of which God revealed Himself in New Testament Times? What is the significance of those facts? How does the meaning of the facts apply to man's needs, to his duty, to the objects for which he exists, to his destiny? In its general character, the New

[1] "The Bible and Criticism," p. 53. Principal Rainy, D.D.

Testament, as regards its subject-matter, is the record of those facts and of their explanation and application. And, therefore, it is from the historical element that the value of the entire New Testament springs.

The Value of the Historical Element in the Bible.

It will, consequently, be admitted that this element occupies a high place in the revelation, and that its value must, indeed, be great. For what is the revelation, or what can it be, unless facts and their meaning and an indication of the bearings of their meaning upon the ends for which the revelation has been provided? The historical element, indeed, is more essential to the revelation than is the record of the revelation, as we shall have occasion to explain more fully, when dealing with the record more particularly. This element might have existed without the record, but the record could not have existed without it. It does not derive its value from the record, but the record derives its value from it. The record is not the revelation; but its function is to make us acquainted with the facts, the movements, the events, in the world and in man's life, in and by means of which the revela-

tion was given; and to help us to understand the significance of the facts, and to live in accordance with their bearings upon our vocation here and our eternal destiny hereafter. It is the function of the record to act as a means towards the establishment of a direct connection between our minds and the historical element, because it is in this that the light of the revelation shines. The record does not lead men to God, nor do they find life in Him or in Christ by means of the record, apart from the real historical element, which the record everywhere presupposes, which is the source of its living power, and without which it would be like plants plucked up by the roots. The record leads the mind backwards to the actual historical element; for instance, to the facts of the life and the death and the resurrection of Christ. In these facts the mind, assisted by the record, finds Christ revealed and believes on Him. The record, and the historical element of the revelation as given in these facts, and the teaching of the Spirit of Truth, and the spiritual experience of the believer, all come into play; the result being that Christ from the distant past enters the believer's life as a real Presence here and now, enters it as the power of an endless life, making for death unto sin and for life unto God.

The immense value of the element in question is abundantly recognised by the Bible. The Bible is constantly seeking to keep us within view of God or Christ revealing Himself in action, in His doings, in His ways. This is one of the most characteristic features of the Bible throughout, as a Book concerned about man's salvation from sin, about spiritual religion, and about living morality. It is ever seeking to point us to Divine movements and achievements; ever seeking to impress us with a sense of the reality and the importance of Divine doings; ever explaining their import or inculcating their lessons. It is because the Bible is ever seeking to do all this that it is a Book of such priceless value. To read the Bible from this point of view, and to understand it as so read, is to find it undergoing a kind of transfiguration. This, indeed, makes it a living Book more precious than thousands of gold and silver. And it does more than anything else, with the help of the Spirit of Truth, to give the teachable mind insight into the unsearchable richness of its meaning.

But it is now time to enter upon an illustration of the place, the extent, and the value of the historical element in the revelation and in the Bible. In doing this it will serve our pur-

pose if we confine the illustration to the New Testament Scriptures; bearing in mind that what is true of these is true also of the Old Testament. Let us begin with the four Gospels.

The Four Gospels: or the Historical Self-manifestation of Christ.

If the Bible contains a revelation within a revelation, this may be held as being the four Gospels, the four Sacred Records of the earthly manifestation of Christ as the Son of God. These four Gospels are the Bible of the Bible. It is by means of them that we are enabled to see the face of Jesus Christ; and when we read them, and begin to take in their spiritual import, we see in His face the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. The object and the effect of these Gospels is to show who and what Christ was; and it is in Him as self-manifested in the facts recorded in them that the self-revelation of God is given in all the fulness of its concentrated and culminating light and glory. Christ regarded Himself and testified to Himself as the Revealer of the Father; and of the truth of His testimony those

were persuaded who had been with Him from the beginning, and who had been eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of His doings and sayings. They believed Him to be the Word of Life, the Word made flesh; and beholding His glory, they saw that it was the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father (John i. 14).

What, then, let us ask, is the value of the historical element in the self-manifestation of Christ as the Revealer of God? The four Gospels are professedly historical. They are written accounts of the history of Christ's life, of His self-manifestation. Their object is to set Him before us, to help us to know Him, and to help us to know God as revealed in Him. In what, then, was the revelation given? The four Gospels are not the revelation. They are only the record of it. They are not the treasure, but it is theirs to show us where the treasure is to be found. The revelation was given in the actual earthly history of Christ. It was in this history, and before any record of the history had been made, that Christ revealed Himself. He had completely revealed Himself in the facts and events of His earthly history years before a sentence of our New Testament had been written; and as soon as He had finished the work of

revealing Himself, He had finished the work of revealing the Father. He was Himself the revelation of the Father; and that which He was, as one with the Father, received manifestation in His entire earthly appearance and its significance. It is this appearance, with its meaning, that shows us what He is, and what the Father is. And the chief end of the detailed records of this appearance in all its phases, is to interest us in the great complex fact of the incarnate Life, to make us acquainted with this fact, to help us to understand its spiritual and practical import; and so to help us to know the Son, that in knowing Him we may know the Father and have eternal life.

But instead of dwelling upon the Gospel history as a whole, let us select a few particulars as illustrations of the value of the historical element in the revelation given by Christ and in Him. His words, His ordinary actions in some instances, His miracles, and His death, were all mediums of the revelation.

The Historical Element in the Words of Christ.

He revealed Himself in His words. And what is noteworthy with respect to His words is,

that they sprang from, and had their character determined by, the nature of the historical situation in which He found Himself as God manifested in the flesh. This is true, not of some of His words only, but of all of them. If any of His words might seem not to come readily under this description, they are those of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.-vii.). And yet, when the situation of Christ as a Teacher is understood, and seen in the light of His moral environment, it becomes apparent that every one of the sayings in the sermon derived its significance and value from the actual position that He and His hearers were in. In His moral surroundings, He found Himself in contact with the false righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. And this righteousness existed in the community not simply as a theory, but as a real and powerful moral influence, working counter to the righteousness of God, and keeping men out of the kingdom of heaven. Hence the Sermon on the Mount was preached. As the Son of God, Christ was in the world to reveal the righteousness of God; and throughout, the sermon is His definition of righteousness *versus* the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. The leading thought of the entire sermon is expressed

in two verses:—"I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (v. 20). "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (vi. 33). Underlying the sermon there were two great historical facts in play; on the one hand, the false righteousness of Judaism, and on the other, the true righteousness of God in Christ seeking to undo it, and to take its place in the ideas, in the hearts, and in the lives of the people.

But Christ's situation as a Preacher and as a Teacher, was not always the same in its minor features. And what we see is this, that as His situation changed, so also did His words. On every occasion His utterances arose from some moral cause or other, present in the circumstances influencing Him at the time. And it is only in the light of the historical moral cause, or causes, to which His words, spoken on any given occasion, had reference, that the revelation contained in His sayings can be clearly and sufficiently apprehended. The record of His utterances in the Gospel history is full of instances of the influence of His moral

environment upon His words in the way now indicated; so full, indeed, that it must be unnecessary to dwell longer upon the point.

But before passing from the words of Christ, we must take special notice of His parabolic method of teaching, as an instance of the great value which He Himself set upon the historical element as a medium of Divine revelation. To look at the parables from this point of view is both interesting and instructive. The revelation of God in Christ is, in one of its grand effects, a revelation of the kingdom of heaven. And Christ's parables contain the truths which He, as the Revealer of God, had to utter to men regarding the kingdom of heaven. It was for Him to consider, then, what might be the best form in which to present those truths, and the parabolic form was the one He adopted. The same truths He might have put into the form of less or more abstract generalisations. Or He might have promulgated them in the form of pure doctrinal statements. But He chose rather to speak in parables. And what was it that He did for those truths in His parables? He created for them a historical element. He embodied them in actual or in fictitious historical conditions. And He did this, not only that the truths might be remem-

bered, but also that He might impart to them life and power, inexhaustible freshness and charm. He knew the immense and undying advantage that the historical element would impart to them. He knew that this element would render them ever as bright as the stars, and as fresh as the flowers of spring. He knew that it would make their meaning obvious to all with eyes open to see it; and yet inexhaustible to the deepest insight and to the worthiest appreciation.

The Historical Element in the Doings of Christ.

Christ, moreover, revealed Himself in His doings as well as in His words. His washing of the feet of the apostles (John xiii. 1-17) was an act of self-revelation. He explained what He did on the occasion in so many words; but His verbal explanation shows that He meant His deed to be an explanation of His entire life in relation to men. In this doing of the Lord there is a whole gospel of meaning. It contains an embodiment of the meaning of His whole life. In it we catch a glimpse of some of the vast regions of the revelation of God in Him. For how did Christ reveal Himself and God?

The revelation sprang from the ruling passion of His life. This ruling passion was His love to man. Constrained by this, He laid down His life in living and in dying as a life of self-sacrifice and service for the salvation of man. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Herein He revealed both Himself and the Father. And both this revelation and the purpose it contemplated, He dramatically embodied in His act of washing the feet of those at supper with Him. All that He wished to show them He might have tried to put into words alone; but He knew that it would be a gain for the revelation, and for its influence upon them to act it in His deed of loving and humble service.

But Christ revealed Himself also in His miracles. He did many mighty works, and His miracles were of various kinds. Moreover, they served more purposes than one. They were an attestation of His claims to be heard and received as One appearing among men, and speaking in the name of God. But they fulfilled, and were intended by Christ Himself to fulfil, another and a higher office. Besides serving the purpose of attesting a revelation, they possessed the character and had the effect of communicating

one. In His miracles, Christ revealed Himself, and in doing this, He revealed the Father. And what may be further added is, that He revealed Himself and the Father in His miracles in a form, in an aspect, which appears nowhere so manifest, nor so striking; no, not even in the cross. Man needs a Saviour on account of His suffering, as well as because of his sin. And that which we see in Christ's miracles is God in Him, manifested in His relation, not so much to the element of sin, as to the element of suffering, in human life. In the cross we see revealed, as nowhere else, the gracious love of God, seeking to save man from sin; and in the miracles we see, as nowhere else, the Fatherly compassion of God, seeking to save man from suffering. The miracles were a revelation of the Divine compassion in view of human suffering; for in nearly every one of the miracles the immediate object and effect was to deliver from suffering those who appealed to Christ for this form of help, or to whom He extended it unsolicited. In every instance, where we find Him moved with compassion, or are told that He was so moved, it was suffering in one form or another that melted His sympathies and called forth His help.

And great is the value of Christ's miracles

from this point of view. Even though we might be able to do without them as proofs that He was God manifest in the flesh, we need them, and suffering humanity will ever be the better for having them, as a revelation of the Fatherly pity of Him who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust (Ps. ciii. 13, 14). And unspeakably more precious is the revelation as given in works of Divine compassion, than it could have been as given in words only, though these had been spoken even by the lips of Christ. It required more than words spoken by Him—it required His death on the cross—to reveal the love of God, seeking to save man as a sinner; and it required more than words, spoken by Him—it required His miracles—to unveil God seeking to save man as a sufferer. The revelation of the compassion of God, as given in the miracles of Christ, is better than all the truest and most impressive words about His pity, that might have been spoken or written, apart from such an embodiment of it in the facts of actual history. In these miracles the compassion is revealed as a thing of real life and power. They are disclosures to us of the very heart of Christ, of the very heart of the Father. They show us the Divine heart bearing the suf-

ferings as well as the sins of man upon its sensibilities, and going out in willing and gracious power to administer relief.

The Historical Element in the Death of Christ.

The death of Christ as a historical fact may be taken as our last illustration of the Divine revelation communicated in His personal history. This fact contains Divine revelation. It is the most outstanding fact in the history of Christ's self-manifestation. There is in it, as a fact making for redemption, more light and power than in any other fact of His history. The death of Christ presents more aspects than one, when viewed as to its significance and purpose and as to its power to accomplish the latter. There was atonement in it. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made (become) the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). And the atoning value of His death is one of its great fundamental features. But there is as much fundamental value in His death as a revelation. It is a revelation. And, indeed, without the revelation given in it, the atonement provided in it would be without spiritual effect upon men. The power of the

cross, as a power unto salvation in men, springs out of the wisdom of the cross. But here we must go a little further. There is revelation in the cross; but more than that: it is in the cross more than in any other fact of Christ's earthly history, that we see the Divine revelation in all its fulness and brightness, and feel it in all its power. But what does the cross reveal? In few words, it reveals the holy, gracious, love of God to the world. The completest revelation that has been given of God, is the completest revelation that has been given of His love; for God is love (1 John iv. 8); and it is in the death of Christ, more than in any other fact, that God commendeth His love toward us (Rom. v. 8).

Now that which has to be pointed out and emphasised here is, that this revelation was given in the fact itself. The moment that Christ bowed His head on the cross, that moment the holy, gracious, love of God was revealed in all the fulness of its light and glory, once for all, for time and for eternity. And in the cross as a fact and in its meaning, the revelation remains for ever and ever. Ten thousand gospels, instead of four, might have told us of the fact, and done their utmost to explain it as a revelation

of the love of God in Christ. But that is all they could have done. They could not have given the revelation; nor could they have taken its place, any more than a record of the fact, and of the explanation of the fact, of the sun's luminosity could take the place of the solar light. The revelation was given and it remains in the fact; and ever since Christ died, the words have been true to the fact: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). And when Christ Himself spoke the words of John iii. 16, 17, He did not mean that His words were, in themselves and apart from actual facts, a revelation; but He spoke them to indicate and to explain the fact that the wondrous greatness of the love of God to men had been, and was being, revealed in the actual gift of His Only Begotten Son; whom He had sent into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Evidently, then, it is in the fact of Christ's death, as a part of the historical element in His self-manifestation, that the wondrous revelation of God's love has been given to the world. In this fact, the love of God has been revealed in

all its greatness, in all its value, in all its holiness, in all its graciousness. In this fact the revelation in all its entireness was embodied. And no written account of the fact could add to or take from the light that shines in it, for all whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit of Truth to perceive its meaning. Moreover, the revelation of God's love, as given in the cross, is a light destined to shine on and on for ever. The Lamb of God, who died upon the cross, and because He died upon the cross, as the Revealer of God, will be the Light of heaven (Rev. xxi. 23). Human languages, both as spoken and as written now, will yet cease to be used. All the paper and parchment on which the revelation in question has been, or may yet be recorded, will perish with all perishing things. But the fact of Christ's death is a fact for all time and for eternity. And the imperishable, eternal record of it will be the translation of its meaning and efficacy into the Book of Life—into the kingdom of saints redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb. The Lamb and His redeemed people will be the Bible of heaven.

CHAPTER III.

REVELATION AND ITS HISTORICAL ELEMENT: PAUL'S EPISTLES AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

In continuing our illustration of the historical element in the Bible revelation, we may pass from the four Gospels to the Epistles of Paul. The Acts of the Apostles is one of the most valuable historical documents in the New Testament; but it is not necessary to dwell upon it as an illustration of the subject in hand, after what has been said on the Gospel history. It contains Divine revelation; and the revelation embodied in it as a history may easily be traced by the interested and intelligent Bible student.

The Historical Element in Paul's Epistles.

Next to the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, the most valuable portion of the New Testament consists of the writings of Paul. He, more than any other writer of the New Testament, may be looked upon as the expounder of

the history of Christ's self-manifestation on the earth as the Son of God. To him it was given to understand Christ and all the leading facts of His history, and to communicate his knowledge of Christianity in his preaching and in his Epistles. We do not know that he ever attempted to write a Life of Christ, such as was written by the four Evangelists. His great question was, What did the life of Christ mean? And it was this question which the Spirit of Truth enabled him to answer for his own age and for all time to come. His answer to this question we have mainly in his Epistles. In them we may discover what all his thoughts were as to the meaning of Christ's life, and as to the meaning of Christianity. We do not, however, require to examine all Paul's leading thoughts on the history of the Son of God, from the time that He became incarnate till the time that He ascended to the right hand of the Father. We have simply to inquire into the place of the historical element of revelation as it affected his teaching.

Paul's Epistles are not histories. And yet, when they are viewed from the standpoint of revelation it becomes apparent that they derive all their value from the historical element. This element pervaded them; and it directly or

indirectly enters into the essential meaning or bearing of every sentence in them. It is manifest at once that all his Epistles arose out of historical conditions; out of occurrences in his own life, or in the life and circumstances of those to whom he wrote. Moreover, his Epistles have had the effect of creating actual history; and in this direction, after more than eighteen centuries have come and gone, they are taking effect every day. The history of Christianity, in the Church and in society, has to a large extent been determined by the life of Christ, as explained by Paul in his writings; and especially is this true of all that has been best in the history.

But there is a way more essential than either of these, in which the historical element pervades his Epistles. Christ's self-manifestation was historical. The history was made up of facts. The facts were full of meaning. And the historical element extends to the meaning, as well as to the facts in their simple character as occurrences. Nay, the meaning is the very essence of the historical element in its relation to the Divine revelation. This, then, is what we find in Paul's Epistles; we find the meaning of the history of Christ. We find a good deal

said about the leading facts of the history as facts; but we find most about their import; and always when the facts are alluded to, they are dwelt upon for the sake of the significance they convey. His Epistles are practical commentaries on the facts of Christ's history. They do not contain any body of dry abstract theological dogmas. But they are full of living doctrine, discovered by him in what, by the teaching of the Spirit of Truth, he saw to be the meaning and bearings of the facts in question. All the revelation contained in his Epistles existed in these facts; and his great work as a teacher, in the service of Christianity, was to apprehend their import, and to communicate to others, in written and spoken words, that knowledge of Divine things to which he had himself attained.

Here the question may be raised as to what were, in particular, those facts in the history of Christ which Paul seems to have found specially charged with revelation. It is very striking to observe in his utterances, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and in his Epistles, an extensive want of allusion to the facts of Christ's history, previous to His death. Had we been dependent upon him alone for our knowledge of this part of the history, so crowded with im-

portant facts, we should have known very little about it. Of many of these facts he must have been aware. It is true that he was not one of those who had been with Christ from the beginning. Moreover, he had few opportunities of learning much about Christ from any of the Apostles who had been with Him during the period of His public ministry (Gal. i. 11-24). Nor have we any evidence that he possessed, before he apprehended God as revealed in Christ, any written narrative of the events in Christ's career during that time. Still, it may be assumed that he did possess a great deal of information regarding those events, and that this information went on in some way or other accumulating as he advanced in his Christian life and in his apostolic labours. But be that as it may, there is a surprising barrenness of detailed allusion to that information in his addresses and in his Epistles. From what facts, then, did his knowledge of the revelation of God in Christ principally spring? It is a pregnant question; and the answer to it discloses the marvellous powers of knowledge possessed by this singular and distinguished man, and shows us by what method the Spirit of Truth teaches a man the things of God.

Here it requires to be premised that Paul never in any way undervalued the facts of Christ's personal history on earth previous to His death; although his Epistles contain so little information as to their occurrence, and pass over them as subjects for practical exposition. His entire exposition of Christ's historical self-manifestation, and of the great leading facts in this history, presupposes the indispensable value that he attached to all the facts preliminary to the cross. But in his Epistles it was enough for his purpose, in the case of every one of them, to allude to the life of Christ previous to His death as a whole, and to regard and present it as an organic part of His entire history. (Gal. iv. 4, 5; Phil. ii. 5-8.)

Those facts which shine, according to Paul's estimation, as stars of the first magnitude in the history of the Divine revelation as given in Christ, seem to have been five: the fact of the incarnation; the fact of Christ's death; the fact of His resurrection from the dead; the fact of His ascension to the right hand of God; and the fact of His intercession there. (Acts xiii. 27-31; Rom. viii. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 1-8; Phil. ii. 5-11.) That all these were facts in Christ's personal history as the Redeemer, and as the

Revealer of God, Paul was most profoundly persuaded. In these more than in any other facts he apprehended that Divine revelation of which his preaching was the message and his Epistles became the record. These facts were the alphabet of his entire message as an Apostle and as an expounder of the revelation of God in Christ. They, more than any other facts, were the prolific seeds of his wondrous knowledge of Divine and eternal things. And it is the fruit of these seeds, as they were planted in his mind and fructified there, that we have in the Divine wisdom of his writings.

The facts in question are the great representative facts in the personal history of Christ. They are pregnant with revelation. They are unsearchably profound in their significance. They are boundless in their spiritual and practical bearings. In them Paul, with his eyes opened by inspiration, saw the Divine revelation shining in all its plenitude and in all the brightness of its glory. He studied them for himself. He studied them independently of help from human teachers. He did not receive what he loved to call *his* gospel from man. Nor was he taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. i. 12). He searched the Old Testament Scriptures. He

turned the light contained in them upon the facts the meaning of which he tried to apprehend. And, seemingly, with this help alone, and as taught by the Spirit of Truth, he was enabled to see the things of Christ, the things of God as revealed in Him. Thus it was that he attained to his deep and comprehensive knowledge of Christianity. Thus it was that he became so able to explain the historical appearance of the Son of God; and to teach men all that he has taught them as to the relation of Christ and of His work to God, to man, to the salvation of sinners, to human history and destiny, and to the destiny of all things.

All this, then, points to one conclusion; the conclusion that the writings of the Apostle are full and alive, every one of them, with the historical element of revelation. There is not one of his Epistles which is not full of the historical Christ. The influence upon his teaching of some one or other of the facts we have been considering, may be traced almost everywhere. Directly or indirectly, he was determined and guided in all he had to say, as a teacher, by the importance he attached to them, and by the revelation of the mind, the will, the purpose, and the ways of God, that he discovered in them.

The Historical Element in the Book of Revelation.

In the New Testament we have no other book like that of Revelation; and for this reason we may select it as our last illustration of the presence and influence of the historical element of revelation in this part of the Canon. This book professedly contains a revelation, and hence its perfectly appropriate designation. The book itself indicates the nature of the revelation. It was a revelation of "things which must shortly come to pass" (i. 1), or as it put in iv. 1, "The things which must be hereafter." The book, in other words, is a record in the form of a symbolic description and explanation of certain occurrences; not occurrences that had already transpired, but occurrences which were destined to happen in time to come. The revelation contained in the book is a dramatic prediction of moral history. And it is correct to say, from this point of view, that the historical element gives character to the substance as well as to the details of the revelation. For the revelation of what was not already history, was put into the form of history, in order that in this form a disclosure might be made of what the actual future was to be within the limits dealt with in the book.

But what we have to show is, that the historical element of Divine revelation enters into this book in another and deeper way than the one now explained. The revelation of the future contained in the book, springs out of a revelation already given. It is in the light of the past that the future is unveiled. That which has already transpired is the standpoint from which the things destined to happen in coming ages are foreseen and understood. But in order to see this, we must cast some glances behind the symbols of the book, and note some of its essential moral ideas.

When John received the revelation, Christianity had an important future before it, a mission in the coming ages, a mighty task to perform, an immense place to fill in the making of human destiny. What was the future of Christianity to be as a tremendous moral power, working for the redemption of the world? What were to be the final issues and eternal results from its presence and influence in history? Was the result to be a glorious achievement? a complete victory and everlasting triumph over evil? Or was evil to win the day? What was to be, in its general features, the history of the relation between Christianity, as the sum of all

the forces that make for good, to all the hostile forces that make for evil, in the working out of man's destiny? This, as we take it, is the fundamental problem to which the Book of Revelation is an answer, at any rate from chaps. iv.-xxii.

One thing certain is, that the problem is one which must have presented itself to the mind of John in his later years. It is a problem in which he must have felt a boundless interest. Christianity and its destiny had been everything to him throughout a long course of years. He had lived to do nothing else but to propagate it, as a gospel of salvation and as a redeeming force in the world. He had doubtless been a keen and enthusiastic student of the history of its propagation, and of the place it had been making for itself in society. And as his life advanced, and he watched and pondered the relation that had been springing up between Christianity and the evil forces that it had to war against in society, the entire problem of the future of Christianity, in relation to those forces, could not but rise up before his mind; and it must have filled his whole soul with intense, unutterable, interest and wonder. And with what unspeakable desire he must have longed for light, for

revelation! It must have been so. And indeed, the pressure of this problem upon the mind and heart of the Apostle, and his consuming longing for its solution, are noted in chap. v. For what was it but the problem in question, that was represented under the figure of the "book, written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals"?—the book of destiny; the destiny of man as decreed by God, and as to be worked out in coming ages by means of the relation and conflict between Christianity and all the forces at war against it. And what is it but John's ardent, infinite longing for the solution of the problem, for a disclosure of the destiny of Christianity, that is implied by the words, "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon?"

But the problem was solved to the Apostle; the book of the future was opened to him, for his own sake and for the sake of the Church. What in its salient features, then, was the answer given? What are the fundamental moral ideas in the revelation he received, in the dramatic prediction of the future of Christianity, as he saw it in his visions and recorded it in his book?

The history was to be essentially a moral one.

It would all transpire, during the progress of the Christian dispensation, under the moral government of God. The history was to be one of tremendous moral reality and seriousness. Throughout its various stages, there was to be terrible conflict; the moral forces of Christianity working and struggling for victory and triumph over evil; and the forces of sin and guilt resisting the advancement of truth and righteousness. Throughout the history of this conflict, there would be a process of Divine judgment, destined to accomplish final and eternal issues. In consequence of this judgment, ever working on the side of the forces of Christianity, there would at last be effected a complete and never-ending separation between all persons and principles proved to be good, and all persons and principles proved to be bad. Good would be the final goal of ill. All things would be made new. The kingdom of God would triumph. Death and hell would be cast into the lake of fire. There would be a new heavens and a new earth. The new Jerusalem would come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Such is the essence, the moral substance, of

the revelation of the future destiny of Christianity that was given to John. But the question now arises, How did he get the revelation? Where and in what way did he find the solution of his problem? The answer is, he found the solution in what was already actual history. In that which had happened, he discovered the key of that which was yet to come to pass. The author of the revelation was God; and Jesus Christ showed the revelation unto John (i. 1). John's eyes were opened to see the future—in its moral course, in its moral significance, and in its moral issues—revealed in Jesus Christ. But the Lamb of God is the leading character in which Jesus Christ is seen and contemplated in the book of Revelation. It was in the Lamb of God, then, in Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, that John discovered the solution of this problem (v. 5-10), "The four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb . . : saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.'"

But what was there in Jesus Christ, as the Lamb that had been slain, to make Him worthy to open the book of destiny, and that rendered it possible for John to see in Him a revelation

of the things that must be hereafter? It was this.—In the history of the Lamb of God upon the earth the entire future moral history of Christianity, as opposed to evil and as in conflict with it and overcoming it, had already transpired in all its essential characteristics. The earthly history of the Lamb, in all its substantial moral aspects, was an epitome of the entire history of the kingdom of God in its relation of antagonism to evil. The history of the antagonism between good and evil as complex moral forces—the history of the mortal conflict between the two, of the Divine judgment that presides over the conflict, and of the issues which the Divine judgment brings into consummation—was totalised in the history of the Lamb. The blood of the Lamb was the index to the book with the seven seals. The blood of the Lamb was the solution of John's problem. John, with his mind full of his problem and with the spirit of revelation resting upon him, fixed his eyes upon the cross, where he saw the Lamb dying; and then fixed them upon the throne of God, where he saw the Lamb reigning; and when he translated the blood of the Lamb into its moral significance, he found the book of destiny unsealed and lying open before him; and he saw

written distinctly on its pages—the things, the moral course of things, which must be hereafter. He saw that this course of things would be a mighty, awful, wide-spread, age-long, historical repetition of what had already come to pass in the personal history of the Lamb. He saw that the Lamb was the Alpha and the Omega, the alphabet, in which this course of things might be written with accuracy, in anticipation of the events. In the Lamb, as the First and the Last, he saw the end as well as the beginning of this course of things, and perceived what must be the fundamental nature of all the intervening history.

This is the principal idea on which the book of Revelation, as a prediction of the future moral course of Christianity, is constructed. Here we are not called upon to expound the idea further, or to illustrate it from the contents of the book. All that our special purpose requires to be done is, that the idea itself should be noted. We have been trying to show that the historical element enters into the foundation and structure of the revelation, or series of revelations, of which the book is the record. In the history of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, living on the earth, dying, rising again from the dead, and seated in

power and glory in the midst of the throne of God, John discovered the key which unlocked the door of the long vista of the coming ages, and he saw a light which flooded the entire vista with Divine revelation.

As in the Gospels, therefore, and as in the Epistles of Paul, so in the Book of Revelation, the historical element forms the essence, the substance, of the revelation it contains. It is the same in every other book of the New Testament; and it is the same in every book of the Old Testament. It is in this element that the entire Divine revelation was communicated. It is from this element that it all springs. In this element it is absolutely safe. It is here where Divine truth is found in its spirit and in its life. It is here where the self-revealing God and we who need the revelation are most directly brought into intercommunication and fellowship.

CHAPTER IV.

REVELATION AND ITS RECORD.

ALREADY attention has been called to the distinction that inquirers into the truth about the Bible have drawn between revelation and its record. We have seen that the historical element fills a large and important place in the revelation of Himself that God has given to us. And the next step in our study of the revelation brings us to consider the place of the sacred Scriptures in relation to it.

It is out of the relation of the Bible to the revelation as its record that many of the difficulties in the way of arriving at the truth about the Bible have arisen; and it is only when the nature of the relation between the two is correctly apprehended that the difficulties are seen to disappear. In seeking to arrive at the truth about the Bible and its relation to the revelation, we require for the task some measure of its own spirit. One of the most prominent and admirable virtues of the sacred writers is the sim-

plicity of mind, the love of truth, the honesty, the frankness, the candour, stamped on all their statements and delineations. And the truth about the Scriptures will not yield itself up unless to those who study their place in the Divine revelation in the spirit in which they were written. If the Bible could speak it would tell us that it desires the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about itself to be known, acknowledged, and defended.

Let us then proceed to inquire into the nature of the relation of the Bible to the revelation. The principal question for examination here is, What are the chief functions of the record as related to the revelation? What are the main ends that it serves? It will be a great help in considering this question to study it in the light of the historical element of the revelation. Indeed it is only in this way that it is possible to arrive at clear ideas on the subject; for it was within the domain of the sacred history, and in the meaning and bearings of the facts of this history, that God revealed Himself to men. Hence, the question to be answered may be put in the more definite form, What is the place of the Bible as the written Word in relation to the historical element of the revelation?

An Unrecorded Revelation Possible.

The first thing that may be affirmed as true about the record is that it was not necessary for the existence of the revelation. The latter might have been given and left unrecorded. In point of fact, many of the revelations contained in the Bible were not recorded by the sacred penmen until long after they had been communicated. The revelation of God in Christ was all embodied in the history of Christ's self-manifestation, which was completed when He ascended to the Father's right hand. And yet it was not until years after that event, that the earliest canonical records of His earthly history were written. The revelation had been given entire and was fulfilling its purposes, before any of the New Testament Scriptures was penned. But though this negative answer to our question is of some value as shedding light upon the relation of the record to the revelation, it need not be further dwelt upon.

The Record and the Preservation of the Revelation.

The ends served by the record are mainly two. It was necessary both as a means of preserving the revelation and as a means of making us

acquainted with it. The two functions are quite distinct and we shall consider them separately.

The record was needed. In order that it might be able to fulfil its purposes, it was necessary for the revelation to be preserved, as well as communicated. But a revelation might be preserved in various ways. It might be preserved in the form of its spiritual results in the mind and life of those for whom it had been given. It is in this form, that is, to say, in the Book of Life, that the Divine revelation will be preserved for ever in the consummated kingdom of God. But before it could be preserved in this form, it required to be translated into it; and meanwhile some other mode of preservation was called for. Oral tradition is another possible mode; but for obvious reasons this is not the one that was adopted. This form would not have been able to fulfil the ends required; for it was necessary for the revelation to be preserved pure and entire from age to age; and the history of the oral traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees is sufficient to show that the revelation, committed to this form, would have suffered much both in purity and integrity. Again, the revelation might have been left to be transmitted by uninspired Scriptures; but here also it would have

suffered in the same way, as may be inferred from the written traditions of the Church of Rome. The only other way in which it could have been handed down from one generation to another, is the one chosen—that of an inspired record. Such a record is perfectly adapted to the ends proposed. By means of it, it was possible not only for the revelation to be preserved, but to be preserved without fault and without deficiency.

Therefore, God has given to us the Bible. He has not given it to be the revelation, but to preserve it and to be the medium for the conveyance of it through the centuries, that down to the latest ages man might have a pure and full knowledge of Him, as He revealed Himself of old in the sacred history. Hence the Word of God written, is to be held as indispensable to the revelation, if the latter was not to be lost or its purposes left unfulfilled. Practically, to those living after the times of the sacred history, the record is of as much value as the revelation itself. For while the latter might have been communicated without the former, it absolutely required the former for its safe and lasting transmission through the coming ages of human history.

But in what sense may the record be said to have preserved the revelation? Here we require to remember that the revelation did not originate in and with the record. All revelation, as has been shown, was given in, and sprang from, its historical element. It was given in the facts of the sacred history and in their meaning and bearings upon the ends which it sought to further. Facts might come into existence full of important meaning and bearings, and they might be of lasting interest to men, and yet they might remain unrecorded. Nor could any record ever put into them their meaning and bearings. A record might tell all it was necessary to know regarding their occurrence, and it might preserve a faithful account of the meaning and bearings discovered in them by men who might be held to be capable of sufficiently understanding them; but its function would end here. And so with the facts of the sacred history; all of which arose independently of any record of them made in aftertimes. The record did not and could not constitute the facts. Nor has it given to them in any sense either their meaning or their bearings, which in a true and full sense were all in them at the time of their occurrence. But the record has pre-

served all the information we require about the facts, and a correct and sufficient account of the meaning and bearings that inspired men saw in them or springing from them.

In order to make this, if possible, plainer, let us take a single fact as an illustration. There was a revelation given in the fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead; a revelation the nature of which we shall see towards the close of a succeeding chapter. This fact occurred in the history of the revelation of God in Christ; and very great prominence and value are assigned to it in the New Testament, where we are told a great deal both about its occurrence and about its meaning and bearings. But beyond telling us about it in these respects, the record does not go. The resurrection of Christ was a fact, containing all its meaning and bearings, before the New Testament began to exist. As soon as His grave was empty, and He was risen indeed, the fact, in reality, entirely embodied already all the revelation—all the meaning and all the bearings —afterwards perceived in it and recorded by inspired men. What they wrote about it simply recorded the revelation previously given in it, as that was unfolded and presented to their mind by the Spirit of Truth. Nothing that any in-

spired man, or that any number of inspired men, writing about it, might have said, could have added one jot or tittle to the revelation, which was all in it the moment it happened. What inspired men were needed to do was to know of the fact for certain, to perceive its real and immense importance in the history of redemption, to apprehend the nature of the revelation contained in it, and to record what they knew or saw that others also might know of the fact and be able to understand it.

In these ways, then, the record of Christ's resurrection has preserved the revelation given in the fact. And such is the relation of the record to the revelation embodied in all the other facts, or springing from all the other facts, of the sacred history. The record has transmitted to us all the information we need as to their occurrence and importance. It gives us a true, and for all practical purposes, an adequate account of all the meaning and bearings discovered in them and inferred from them, by inspired men. And it does all this, that we may understand the facts in the same way as they did, and be influenced by them accordingly. The record is not the revelation. It points us to the facts and tells us that the revelation is in them. And to make

sure that the facts will not be misunderstood by us, it gives us all the help and guidance we need in order that, taught by the Spirit of Truth, we may learn from them all we require to know.

Regarding this function of the record, there is still another question to which a little attention may be given. Has the revelation, as communicated by God in the sacred history, been indeed preserved in all its integrity in the Bible as its record?

In one way the Bible is not a complete record of the historical element in which the revelation was given. That is to say, it does not give a complete record as regards details, of the entire Divine movement in connection with which the revelation was communicated. Indeed, the Bible does not profess to be complete in this respect. In God's ways with men, in His doings, as the self-revealing God, moving along the line of the sacred history, it is probable that many things happened in matters of detail, but nevertheless of great value, of which no record was made by writers of the Old Testament. As regards the New Testament record, we know as a matter of certainty that incompleteness in this form is one of its features. So the New Testament itself tells us. The most important period in the

history of the Divine revelation was that covered by the life of Christ. God was revealed in His life all through from beginning to end. Everything in which Christ was self-manifested helped to show the Father. Yet there were many details in Christ's life in which He was self-manifested, about which the records of His life are silent. Many of the years of His life at Nazareth were filled up with details, in every one of which some form of self-manifestation must have been embodied; yet the Gospel narratives tell us nothing at all regarding them. And even during his public life many things happened in which He was self-manifested, and in which God was revealed, but which the Evangelists, for one reason or another, left out of their accounts of His life. This is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of fact. Of the fact we have many indications in the various Gospels. And John closes his Gospel with the words, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one of them, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (xxi. 20).

The truth is, that God's mode of revealing Himself to man has been characterised by great

lavishness. In the history of the revelation there was enough and to spare. It abounded in profusions. There were from first to last many precious fruits of Divine self-manifestation, which, as if they had been superfluities, never were harvested by the sacred writers. And we must accept the view that God Himself, whose providence has guarded and preserved the revelation, did not see it to be necessary to have these lost fruits garnered in the sacred record.

But while the record is thus incomplete, as compared with the superabundance of the revelation, as historically communicated, it is not incomplete, as compared with the ends for which it was given. Of the fruits of the Divine self-manifestation, there have been garnered in it enough for all practical and spiritual purposes; one might even say, more than enough. It does not detract from the sufficiency of the light we receive from the sun, that there is so much of its light lost to us in extra-mundane spaces. And all that has been lost to our knowledge, because unrecorded, of numerous details in the ways of the self-revealing God, during the progress of the sacred history, has left, as will be shown more fully in a subsequent chapter, the revelation, as recorded in the Bible, all-sufficient.

Nothing essential to it has been lost. By means of the record of it and of a proper use of it, it is possible to attain to that knowledge of Divine things and to that life eternal, which the revelation is intended to impart to us.

The Record and the Knowledge of the Revelation.

We have thus seen that it is one of the great functions of the Bible to preserve the Divine revelation, and that in this respect it fulfils the end of its existence. But it has now to be observed, further, that the revelation has been preserved, as it was communicated, that men might become acquainted with it. And this brings another function of the Bible into view. The design of the written Word is to lead men to the knowledge of the revelation as presented in the Divine embodiments of the Bible history. It is in the historical element of the revelation that the Divine light has been made to shine; and it is the function of the Scriptures to tell us of the light, to inform us as to where it has been communicated, to impress our minds with a sense of its value, to guide us to it, to help to open our eyes to see it, and to induce and encourage us to walk in the ways that it opens up for our life.

It will help to bring out into clearer light the

function of the Bible, in this connection, if we look at it in its relation to Christ. Christ can be truly and fully known only by means of His self-manifestation in history. He is a stranger to us as regards His real personality and power until we have seen Him, as self-manifested within this sphere. It is in the facts of His earthly history that the knowledge of Him is placed within our reach. When this is noted, then, it is easy to see the end which the record of His life is required and fitted to serve. It is a record of necessary information about His life.[1] It is a testimony to the transcendent value of His life, both in its Godward and in its manward aspects. It seeks to let us see what His life meant, as this was understood by inspired men. And it undertakes to show us the benefits that spring out of His life for us; the obligations and responsibilities it has laid upon us; and the privileges and hopes into which it is able to introduce us. In short, it is the function of the record of Christ's earthly history, to bring us to the knowledge of the facts of that history, and thereby to the knowledge of Christ Himself, that our fellowship might be with Him and with the Father.

[1] Here Christ's life is spoken of in its larger sense as including His death, resurrection, &c.

The function of the Bible, now in question, was at the foundation of Christ's views of Himself and His relation to men. His words, as spoken, were no less Divine, than they were afterwards when written. And His written words, as mediums of revelation, have the same relation to us, as His spoken words had to those who listened to Him. But He never meant His spoken words to come between Him and His hearers, so as to take the place that belonged to Him as an object of knowledge and faith. What He aimed at was, to have direct and right spiritual relations set up between His hearers and Himself; and He spoke His words that they might supply help, stimulus, guidance, and encouragement towards the securing of this grand result. He spoke His words that His hearers might be led by means of them and beyond them to Himself as the Light and the Life of men. He was Himself the Truth. And His message was, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). And all that is thus true regarding His own words as spoken is equally true regarding the New Testament record of His history. The object of it is to lead us to a knowledge of the

facts of the history; and on from this to the knowledge of Him, who is the True God and the Eternal Life.

It will thus be seen that the function of the Bible, which we have just explained, may be truly described as one of immense practical importance. It is of much consequence that it should have a prominent place assigned to it in the theory of revelation; and it is so, particularly for the reason, that in connection with it the existence and interests of spiritual life are involved. We cannot have spiritual life in Christ unless we know Him; and we cannot know Him unless in so far as He was self-manifested in the facts of His history. The place of the record in relation to spiritual life, then, is this: it gives to us the knowledge of Christ's history; and in this it gives the knowledge of Christ Himself, as He lived and died, and rose again from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of God. It is in Christ Himself that eternal life is found. This life is not in the Bible. It is more immediately in the great facts of Christ's history than it is in the written Word. It is Christ Himself, as He was self-manifested in those facts of which Scriptrue is the record, who is the Life.

To use the record, then, with a view to

spiritual life, one needs to be careful not to use it as in itself an end. The end for which it has been provided lies above and beyond itself. Its outlook is ever in the direction of God, of Christ, of the world of unseen and eternal reality. Thither it is ever pointing us on, saying, "Behold, understand, believe, and live." Nor has the Bible ever served its own end until it has led one beyond itself. This is not only true regarding it, but there is no other truth regarding its function, of more vital consequence. Not to see this truth is to be blind to one of the main reasons for which God has provided His written Word. And those who ignore or deny it have the testimony of the entire Bible and the witness of God Himself against them. They have also against them the testimony of true spiritual experience, as one very simple instance will be sufficient to illustrate. "The way in which I found peace with God," explained an unsophisticated person, "was this—it was by means of the words, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out' (John vi. 37). But it was not so much the words themselves that gave me peace, as He who spoke them: it is a most precious word that *I*;" "*I* will in no wise cast out." The Bible is a record of facts, of

truths, of precepts, of warnings, of promises, of invitations; in all of which God Himself speaks to men, and in all of them the object is to establish a direct relation between Him as Speaker and them as hearers, in order that they might know and trust in Him and do His will.

The Bible is not the Saviour; it only tells us all we require to know about Him for saving purposes. It is not the bread of life; it only tells us all we need to know about Him, who said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi. 51). It is not the living water; it only tells us all we require to learn about Him who testified, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). Christ Himself is the life. The great facts of His history are the fathomless and inexhaustible fountains through which the water of life springs up from Him. And the Bible record of those facts is the way and the guide to those fountains, and the cup for drinking with by faith at the living streams.

An Illustrative Phenomenon.

Let us take, by way of illustration, one instance of the great value of the facts of Christ's history in their relation to spiritual life. This will help to increase and intensify the light already shed upon the function of the Bible in this connection. It may be said that it was after the ascension of Christ and before almost any of the books of the New Testament were written, that the tide of spiritual life, in the Apostolic Church, reached the high-water mark of its purity and power. After that the number of believers increased; but it is doubtful if, after that, believers ever had more of Christ's spirit in them or more of His power resting upon them. And even in this age we, with all our Bibles and all our deluge of commentaries, and all our preaching and sermon-hearing, might well envy the purity and power that distinguished these primitive Christians; and that even before any of the writers of the New Testament had put a pen to parchment. This was a remarkable phenomenon; and in it there is valuable instruction for us on the point at present before us.

How is the phenomenon to be explained?

These Christians had, indeed, the Old Testament Scriptures to help to make them wise unto salvation through faith in Christ. But how did they do without the New Testament Scriptures? The answer is: They had the knowledge of the great facts of the history of Christ, which give to those Scriptures all their value. The facts were then of recent occurrence. They filled the imagination; they awakened the feeling of wonder; they touched the heart; they appealed to the conscience; they were manifestations of unthought-of Divine love and grace; they distinctly pointed in the direction of glorious hopes. And Christ Himself was seen in the facts; He was found in them; He was trusted in connection with them; He was loved because of what they proved Him to be: and thereby Christ by His Spirit became a real presence in the life of those Christians, and a real power resting upon them.

The most note-worthy instance of this phenomenon was Paul. In him spiritual life completely gained the ascendant. To win Christ was his supreme ambition. For him to live was Christ and to die was gain. How came this to pass in him? The first New Testament writing was from his pen, and it had all come to pass before even it was written. Like others he, of course,

owed much to the teaching of the Old Testament. But the secret of his spiritual life lies in this—that he knew of the great Gospel facts and understood them; the facts in particular of the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ, as the incarnate Son of God. He set his thoughts upon these facts; he pondered their significance and bearings; and through them directly the knowledge of God in Christ was given to him, the spirit of Christ became the spirit of his life, the power of Christ over him became all-commanding, and henceforth he was Christ's in life, in death, and for ever. And it was because there was so little besides these facts to come between him and Christ, who was self-manifested in them, that the spirit of life and of revelation obtained such entire possession of him.

What, then, is the element of instruction in all this for us? We are not taught by the phenomenon in question that the record of the history of Christ is unnecessary for us, or that it possesses little value. But we are taught to give the record its proper place in relation to the history. We are taught to use it as the way and the guide to the fountains of living water, and as the cup for drinking with at the wells.

We need Christ as our life as much as did Paul and the other Christians of his time. And therefore we, as much as they did, need the facts of His history. To spiritual life in us, these are as necessary and as essential as they were to it in them. And for this reason, we require to take care not to let the record come between us and the facts, so as to remain there, keeping us apart from them. Its place is to bring us into direct, believing, and intelligent connection with them. It has been given to us by God, not because we do not need the facts, but because we do need them; not to keep us away from them, but to lead us to them, and to an apprehension of their import. They were facts embodying acts of Divine self-manifestation and of Divine self-communication. As such there was boundlessness in them. They are inexhaustible wellsprings of light and of life; for Christ, God manifest in the flesh, the Light of the world and the Life of men, was in them. And what in these respects they were at their origin, they are now, and ever will be. And the tide of spiritual life in every age, in every Christian, and in every Christian Church, must ebb or flow according as a small or a large place is given to these facts

in the faith professed and acted upon. It is by going to these facts, which occurred so many centuries ago, seeking to see Christ, and finding Him as He was then self-manifested in them, that He is to be found and known as the power of an endless life now, and as a real redeeming and blessed presence in and with the believer and the Church. The function of the Bible is to contribute towards this result. It seeks to bring us to the knowledge of Christ, and to a life of fellowship with God, that we may be found in the Book of Life, and have our names written in heaven.

CHAPTER V.

REVELATION AND BIBLE DISCREPANCIES.

THE discrepancies of the Bible belong to the department of our subject examined in last chapter. The Divine revelation, as we have seen, required to be preserved pure and entire; and if discrepancies exist in its record, the question arises, Do these not in some way or other render impure or corrupt the revelation as it has come down to us? The question is so large and important that two entire chapters will have to be devoted to the treatment of it.

The Discrepancies are Comparatively Few.

The number of discrepancies in the Bible appears to be wonderfully small, when a few leading facts as to its character and history are kept in view. It is not one book only, but consists of a very extensive literature—sixty-six books in all. These books, in whole or in part,

were written at intervals extending over a period of sixteen hundred years. In one way or another they are all on the subject of redemption, religion, and morality; and yet very great is the diversity of their subject-matter, and of the mode in which it is treated. The production of various parts of the literature belonged to very different stages, and to very different areas of civilisation; and the authors of the books were men of various degrees of culture and station in life. The books were not all written at the time when, and in the places where, the events narrated and dealt with in them occurred. Some of the writers had to work up information received by them at second hand. As in the case of the four Gospels, various writers wrote about the same occurrences; some of whom were eye-witnesses of what they narrated, and some not. When these and other such facts are considered, then, it is not in the least surprising that some discrepancies should have found their way into the Bible as a record of Divine revelation. But one thing is fitted to cause surprise indeed; and that is, that the number of discrepancies actually found in it is so very small.

That there are comparatively few discrepancies in it is a fact which calls for special notice;

and that because a tendency to exaggerate the number of them has been shown in various quarters. In many instances this tendency has gone so far as to assume the form of a strong and glaring proclivity. Almost infinitely more than any other book, the Bible has been wronged by men hungering to discover faults in it; and ready to impute them even where they did not really exist, and to magnify their importance where they happened to appear. Among those who have allowed this proclivity to control them in their criticism of the Bible, rationalistic writers have occupied a conspicuous place. In this connection, the names of Strauss and Renan require only to be mentioned as examples. But even Keim in his "Jesus of Nazara"—a Life of Christ which possesses some uncommon excellencies,—is carried away by the unfortunate bias in question to an extent which is highly provoking and irritating to the sense of fairness. From this wrong it is the duty of the apologist to defend the Word of God. He is not called upon to deny, or to explain away, any of the real discrepancies that can be shown to exist in it. It does not require him to do that. It is able to bear all the responsibility laid upon it by these; and it could bear the responsibility of many

more of the same kind, if they had actual existence. But it is unjust to exaggerate either the number or the seriousness of the faults for which it has to answer.

The Discrepancies are Unimportant.

The importance of these discrepancies, like their number, has been greatly magnified. This result has arisen from two widely different causes. An excess of importance has been attached to them, both by those favourable and by those unfavourable, to the existence of a revelation, possessing the character of a supernatural communication from God. As regards those unfavourable to the existence of such a revelation, the discrepancies in the Bible have been employed as an argument to justify the position they have taken up. It has been contended that these discrepancies are incompatible with that supernatural character which the Bible-revelation has been believed to bear. But this is putting them into a place of importance which does not in reality belong to them. The supernatural character of the revelation, as we shall soon see, is not in any sense, nor to any extent, affected by them. Both the purity and the integrity of the revelation are

left absolutely untouched by their presence in the record. Notwithstanding their existence, the position that there is a supernatural element in the revelation remains as strong and as safe as it could have done, though there had been an entire absence of discrepancies from the record all through, from the first word of Genesis to the last word of Revelation.

But many of those also who are favourable to the supernatural element in the revelation require to be reminded of this, or to have it set before them. They, too, exaggerate the importance of these discrepancies. This is why some of them go all the length of refusing to admit their existence. This is why they shudder to think of their existence in the Bible being affirmed or owned. This is why they imagine that their existence in it would render it unworthy to be absolutely trusted as being or as containing a perfect revelation from God. And this is why they regard all those men as enemies of a supernatural revelation and of the Bible, who happen not to be able to shut their eyes to the discrepancies in the latter, and who feel compelled to be frank and honest enough to acknowledge their existence.

Underlying all this, then, there is a great deal

of exaggeration. The importance of these discrepancies is magnified to a degree immensely beyond that which properly belongs to them. But in the latter case, the motive from which the exaggeration arises is quite different from that of those who turn the discrepancies into an argument against the supernatural element in the Bible. Here the motive springs from faith in that element, from fear lest it should greatly suffer at the hands of its enemies, from a powerful jealousy for it, and from a determined zeal to have it safeguarded. Nevertheless, the motive carries in it a mistaken judgment. Those who yield to it are misled by false impressions. They are the victims of wrong opinions. It is these opinions which give rise to their unnecessary fears. And in attaching so much importance to the discrepancies as they do, they lend not a little support to rationalists and others, who hold that the Bible containing them cannot have been supernatural in its origin.

It, therefore, greatly concerns all those who sincerely believe in the supernatural element in the Bible, to take the necessary pains to inform themselves as to the real nature and value of the discrepancies which the Bible contains. Especially does it concern all those to do this, who

profess to have enlightened opinions as to the nature of the Divine revelation, and a critical acquaintance with the Bible; and who undertake to pronounce judgment upon these matters for the guidance of others. If the discrepancies had not been put into a place of importance very far above their real merits, there would have been much less heard about them, both from those who have used them as a weapon against the Bible, and from those who have trembled for the Bible because this attack has been directed against it. The battle over the discrepancies, earnestly as it may have been fought, has been a toy-warfare. In the Word of God there is that which is well fitted to put all triumphs over them and all fears because of them to silence and to shame. "No Christian ought to allow his faith in Christianity to be entangled with these small points (the discrepancies), or to be at the mercy of the arguments about them. Christianity stands whether inaccuracies have been allowed to gather round the fringes of it or not. Our main persuasion about the Bible should be the persuasion of its fitness to instruct us in the truth of God about all the momentous matters in which He deals with us. . . . In comparison with the conviction you entertain about the main

office and message of the Bible, you should, as you reasonably may, habitually cherish the feeling that the question about these small matters is thoroughly despicable, that you are not going to allow them to trouble you." [1]

The unimportance of the discrepancies, however, requires to be explained and proved. But before doing this it may be well to indicate what is meant by discrepancies.

What are Discrepancies?

Discrepancy is not the only word employed to denote those blemishes in the Bible to which it is applied. The terms, "mistake," "inaccuracy," "contradiction," "error," are all less or more vaguely used to describe the same things. But, in reality, very little importance attaches to any one of them, as distinguished from the rest; although, as the facts denoted by them are not all of exactly the same nature, some of them might be more appropriately designated by one word, and some by another. The point of main importance to be kept in view is, that there are certain phenomena in the Bible, as the record of the Divine revelation, to which some one or

[1] "The Bible and Criticism." Principal Rainy.

other of these names may be fairly and suitably applied; phenomena some of which it is not unjust to speak of even as errors—as deviations, that is to say, for instance, from actual occurrences: not deviations of any fundamental or essential value; but such as leave absolutely untouched both all the substantial facts of the revelation, and the meaning and bearings of those facts as elements in the Divine communication.

It is the custom of some writers to speak of the discrepancies as "apparent" or "seeming" blemishes in the Bible. As regards some of them the word "seeming" is appropriately enough applied; for in regard to them the discrepancy disappears in the light of less or more probable explanations. And even in regard to all the rest, it is fair to hold that the discrepancy exists only in the record, and that it would not be found at all in the actual circumstances to which the record refers, if only we were in possession of complete information regarding them. But while this is so, discrepancy does exist in the record, and in connection with its existence there, many minds have been greatly exercised.

Admissions as to the Existence of Discrepancies.

The actual existence of discrepancies or errors in the Bible, as the record of the Divine revelation, is a matter of fact. And even although their presence in it were not perfectly harmless, it would still have to be granted that they are there. Their existence was not denied either by Luther or by Calvin. Nor was it denied by Paley, as appears from his chapter on the "Discrepancies of the Several Gospels."[1] Nor was it actually denied by Charles Hodge, although it seems impossible to square the admission with his theory of inspiration. "It is simple matter of fact," another writer says, "that various statements in the Bible *seem* to be inaccurate, for they seem inconsistent with other Bible statements, or else with evidence, apparently trustworthy, from other quarters; or they are in their own nature startling or unlikely. Occurring in another book, they would be set down as probably inaccuracies or mistakes, such as may befall authors of good faith and intelligence; very many of them being in matters so subordinate and unimportant that in another book they would attract little attention or discussion. Occurring in the Bible, they

[1] "Evidences of Christianity."

have caused a great deal of discussion." [1] To the same effect another writer says, "No careful student of Scripture can well deny that there are inaccuracies in the Gospels and elsewhere, inaccuracies such as occur in ordinary writings, through imperfect information and lapse of memory." [2]

To these admissions it would be easy to add many others made by writers whose opinions on such matters carry weight. But further quotation is quite unnecessary. The truth is, that the existence of discrepancies in the Bible-record is a matter of fact. Their presence in it is perfectly obvious; nor can they be either denied or explained away. Their existence is as real and undeniable as the record itself, in which they occur. The denial of their existence must spring in every instance, either from inadequate knowledge of the Bible, or from a blameworthy want of readiness to receive the whole truth concerning it. Besides, such denial is very unwise. For the Bible is wronged and the tongues and pens of its enemies are strengthened against it, when its professed friends deny anything that is true regarding it, or claim for it a form of fault-

[1] "The Bible and Criticism." Principal Rainy.
[2] "Revelation and Inspiration." Professor Dods.

lessness which it neither possesses nor pretends to possess; and which is required neither by the nature, nor by the methods, nor by the ends of the Divine revelation. Between the perfection of the revelation and the discrepancies in its record there is absolute compatibility. This assertion is a strong one. But strong as it is, the truth of it can be fully and clearly demonstrated. And this demonstration we now proceed to offer.

How to View the Discrepancies.

In order to test the real value of the discrepancies and to see how unimportant they are, much depends upon the point of view from which they are regarded. It is because they have often been considered from a false point of view that many have used them as evidence against the supernatural element in the Bible; and that many others, believing in this element, have imagined them to be inconsistent with the perfection of the Divine revelation. The parties here referred to have committed the blunder of estimating the value of the discrepancies too exclusively in their relation to the record in which they exist. Hence the misunderstanding into

which they have been inevitably plunged. The truth as to the real value of the discrepancies must be sought in other directions. The record is not the only factor to which they are related. Besides the record there is the revelation recorded. And, more particularly, there is the historical element which the revelation involves throughout, and which forms the substance of the revelation. What requires to be done, then, in testing the actual value of the discrepancies, is this: they must be viewed not merely from the standpoint of the record containing them; but rather from the standpoint of the revelation recorded, and from the standpoint of the historical element, in which the revelation was given. When they are so viewed, every vestige of their importance vanishes out of sight; and notwithstanding their presence in the Bible, the revelation itself is seen to shine in all the fullness and brightness of its perfection and infallibility.

Let us then look, in the first place and briefly, at the discrepancies in the light of the revelation; and then go on to study them in the light of the historical element in which the revelation was embodied.

The Discrepancies and the Revelation.

When we speak of the revelation of which the Bible is the record, the entire revelation is meant—all that which constitutes the substance or essence of the revelation; everything that is necessarily or truly relevant to it; and everything that is really required for the fulfilment of its designs. The revelation as so understood, then, is left absolutely unimpaired and untouched by the discrepancies which appear in its record.

Here it is necessary to give some attention to three false assumptions, not uncommonly made with respect to the relation between the revelation and its record — assumptions which are responsible for much of the wrong that has been done to the Bible and to the cause of truth.

1. It has been by many assumed that the revelation and its record are identical or coextensive. But the fallacy of this assumption need not be dwelt upon here, as it has been sufficiently exposed in previous chapters.

2. Again; it has been by many assumed that a record with imperfections or discrepancies in it necessarily implies an imperfect and more or less corrupt revelation. But this assumption, like the

former, is utterly groundless. A revelation might be entirely perfect, and yet in some respects its record might be marked by various imperfections. In point of fact, it is so in the case of the Bible revelation. In some respects the Scriptures do very imperfectly record the revelation of Himself which God communicated by means of the facts of the sacred history. (1). For one thing, it has already appeared that many of the doings of the self-revealing God are not recorded in the Bible at all. (2). Then, it is to be remembered, further, in this connection, that there was in the Divine movements in history, in and by means of which the revelation was given, far more significance than could be embodied in any record, even in any inspired record, of them. This is true, for instance, of the facts of the incarnation and death and resurrection of the Son of God. Or take the death of Christ alone. After all that inspired men have told us of the love of God as revealed in this fact, and after we have taken in the meaning of their words, we are still left to feel that the Divine love passeth knowledge. Not only so; even inspired men themselves, after all that inspiration had enabled them to see and to write and to experience of this love as revealed, especially

in the cross, had to acknowledge that there was a boundlessness in it, which transcended not only their words, but their very thoughts (Eph. iii. 19). And what is thus true of the death of Christ, is true of all the great facts of the sacred history. The Bible is, in the sense explained, an imperfect record of them. (3). Moreover, it is relevant to add here, that the imperfection of the Bible record has been increased by the translation of the Scriptures from their original languages into other tongues. The most perfect record existing of the Divine revelation is that which has been preserved in the original languages, the Hebrew and the Greek. Neither the English Bible, nor the Bible in any other tongue, can express exactly, and neither more nor less, book for book, sentence for sentence, and word for word, what the sacred writers meant to convey by means of the Hebrew or Greek words and constructions which they employed. And, therefore, it may be held as certain that every version of the Scriptures, even the best which it might be possible for human learning and piety to produce, must of necessity involve some loss for the revelation, in so far as it is related to its record.

But from these various forms of imperfection

in the record, it does not follow that we have an imperfect revelation. On the contrary, we have other grounds for the conclusion that the revelation, notwithstanding these defects, is perfect; perfect as regards its essential qualities, its sufficiency, and its designs and practical adaptations. Nor would any person be foolish enough to deny these various forms of perfection to the revelation, on the ground of any or all of the three forms of imperfections in the record, just indicated. No one would say that the revelation cannot be perfect, either because every version of the Bible must be a less or more imperfect translation of the original Scriptures; or because the Bible necessarily comes far short of recording all the significance that was in such a fact as the death of Christ; or because many of God's doings, in the course of His self-manifestation, were never recorded in the Bible.

All this, then, has a bearing upon the discrepancies, which are a kind of imperfection in the record of the revelation. And it all leads to the conclusion that it is false to assume, that this form of imperfection in the record is incompatible with the perfection of the revelation. For the other three forms of imperfection that have been pointed out, all leave the perfection of

the revelation unmarred and unaffected; and still more so do the discrepancies: for as a form of imperfection they, owing to their nature, constitute a less serious defect than any of the others.

3. But, again, it has been assumed that such an imperfection in the record as the discrepancies must necessarily interfere with or hinder the revelation in the accomplishment of its purposes. And this is, no doubt, one reason why many persons, well-disposed towards the Bible are so alarmed when it is said or admitted by any religious teacher, that inaccuracies are to be found in Scripture. Let it be noted, then, that the assumption in question is altogether false and unwarranted. That which the revelation does, indeed, require for the fulfilment of its designs is, not a record in every respect absolutely perfect, but one in every respect relatively perfect. If an absolutely perfect record had been required, God would have done everything in His power to provide such a Bible for us; and in His Providence He would have preserved the Scriptures in this faultless form. And it is ours reverently to believe that God's reason for not providing such a record of the revelation for us, must have been that His

wisdom did not see any necessity for it. But a record relatively perfect was indeed required; and such a record God has provided: and it becomes all who believe in Him to accept His written Word in the form in which He has seen fit to give it, and with every form of departure from absolute perfection which He has caused or permitted it to bear.

Now, with reference to the relative perfection of the record, it is to be further observed, that the discrepancies leave it altogether untouched. They leave the record perfectly adequate as a medium for leading man, when taught by the Spirit of Truth, to that knowledge of God which is eternal life. They in no way whatsoever interfere with the record or hinder it as regards its function to preserve for man all he requires to know of the Divine revelation—of its nature and contents, of the method and history of its communication, of the ends for which it was given, and of the way in which a personal and spiritual enjoyment of its benefits may be attained. With respect to all this, the record of the revelation, with all its discrepancies, is as perfect, relatively, as it could have been, though it had pleased God to provide it for us without a single inaccuracy. Hence God permitted

discrepancies to arise in the record of His revelation. He knew that the revelation could be transmitted from age to age, and could accomplish its purposes as efficiently by means of a record with inaccuracies in it, as it could have done by means of a record entirely free from such blemishes.

But the argument for the relative perfection of the record, notwithstanding its discrepancies, may be carried even further. It might not be going too far to urge, that a record with discrepancies in it is relatively more perfect than a record without them would have been. It is consistent with humble and reverent faith in God to say, that the Bible that He has given to us is the kind of record that He saw to be best adapted to the purposes of His self-revelation. But the Bible that He has given to us as the record of the revelation, does contain discrepancies; and it becomes us to infer that He foresaw this kind of record would be relatively better than one absolutely free from blemish. Indeed, a record absolutely free from blemish of every kind might have been—it may be said would certainly have been—a disadvantage as regards the revelation and a stumbling-block to men. The temptation that is yielded to by many, to put the record in the place of the revelation, would

have been increased by such a record. Encouragement would have been added to the too prevalent tendency to value the letter rather than the spirit of the written Word; and to the tendency to be satisfied with a knowledge of the record itself, without using it simply as a guide to a personal and direct knowledge of God Himself, and to a life of fellowship with Him. Thus it may be contended that the very discrepancies in the record are an advantage with respect to the ends of the revelation. In many instances their presence in the Bible has been an occasion of good. To truth-loving and truth-seeking minds, they have proved a help rather than a hindrance. They have acted as a stimulus to thought. They have increased devotion in the study of the Scriptures. They have quickened the spirit of earnestness in the search for truth. They have helped to develop the power of spiritual insight and discernment. They have helped many on their way from the record to the revelation, and through the revelation to God. They have not weakened faith in the Bible as God's Word, but have rendered it stronger.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HISTORICAL ELEMENT OF REVELATION AND BIBLE DISCREPANCIES.

THE historical element in the revelation is by far the best standpoint from which to see the insignificance and the harmlessness of the discrepancies. Indeed, when their value is estimated in the light of this element, it almost causes surprise to discover the utter want of importance that attaches to them, in so far as the revelation is related to them. In the light of this element it becomes perfectly obvious, that from the beginning to the end of the Bible, there is not one discrepancy, or inaccuracy, or error of any kind whatsoever, however real and inexplicable the fault may seem to be, but leaves the Divine revelation recorded in the Book entirely without flaw or blemish.

In explaining and establishing this position, however, we shall not roam over the entire field of Scripture. It will be quite sufficient for our purpose to keep within the narrower limits of

the four Gospels. The conclusions we are led to from a study of them, apply in all their force to the relation of the discrepancies to the historical element in all the other books of Scripture. Besides, there is a cogent reason why the Gospels should be selected for light and evidence respecting the present inquiry. They record the actual history of the self-manifestation of the Son of God, the Revealer of the Father. As such they record the most important part of the Divine revelation as communicated to man throughout the course of the sacred history. And, consequently, if discrepancies could have real importance and prove in any way injurious to the revelation, as recorded in any portion of Scripture, this must have happened in connection with the discrepancies in the Gospels and the revelation recorded in them. To the Gospels, therefore, we shall confine our exposition and argument.

Before going into details one general observation is at this point called for. The four Gospels present us with a representation of Christ as the Revealer of God; and the representation remains absolutely the same as it would have done, supposing no trace of discrepancy or inaccuracy of any kind had found its way into any of the sacred narratives. With all the alleged

discrepancies that these narratives contain, they have nevertheless served the purpose of creating in the minds of men a true impression of what manner of person Christ was. By means of them men have been led to believe in the justness of Christ's claims to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. By means of them they have seen in Him what they have been compelled to regard as the perfect image of the Father. And no other narratives, though perfect in every way as records to the last degree, could have produced a truer and higher impression of Him whom to see is to see the Father. Therefore, it is to be held that all the discrepancies in these Gospels, even when taken in their entire effect, leave the revelation of God, as historically communicated in the self-manifestation of Christ, wholly undistorted and unimpaired. Accordingly one writer has affirmed: "Much has been made of the discrepancies said to exist between the several Gospels, for the sake of invalidating their testimony. But these supposed discrepancies, even if they affect particulars and externals, leave the essence of the history untouched." [1] "Supposing," says another, "that the evangelists contradict one another in

[1] Luthardt.

historical and chronological details of the life of Jesus, which do not affect the substance of the revelation, this does not obscure a single lineament of that portrait of Christ, which they have painted in colours given them by the Holy Ghost."[1] And, indeed, one writer goes even further with reference to the discrepancies in Christs' sayings, as reported by the Evangelists, and says, "It is a nowise inadmissible supposition, that they (the Evangelists) so far exercised their discretion in the use of their sources, as to make the material serviceable to the edification of those for whose special benefit they wrote—acting not in a spirit of license, but with the freedom of men who believed that it was more important that their readers should get a true impression of Christ than that they should know the *ipsissima verba* of His sayings."[2]

Discrepancies and Christ's Sayings.

Thus, then, it has been testified that the discrepancies in the Gospels do not hinder them from creating on the mind the impression of the perfect image of Christ. To say so much is the same as to say, that they do not at all im-

[1] Martensen.
[2] "The Kingdom of God." Professor Bruce.

pair the revelation of God given in Christ. But it is necessary for us to go deeper into our inquiry, and to verify by detailed explanations the general position thus laid down. The proof must be sought in three separate directions. These are (1) the reported sayings of Christ; (2) the facts in His history; and (3) the significance and bearings of the facts in His history. The value of the discrepancies requires to be tested by reference to each of these factors in the Gospels.

The discrepancies in the sayings of Christ, as reported by the four Evangelists, are numerous and not all of the same nature. The report of one Evangelist, as compared with that of another, sometimes presents a modification, sometimes an omission, and sometimes an addition. But what requires to be shown is, that none of the discrepancies are such as to affect injuriously the revelation—the essential truth—that was embodied in any of the utterances ascribed to our Lord. In seeking to show this, it will be sufficient to deal with a few of the discrepancies in question by way of example.

The reported utterances of Christ form a part of the historical element in the Divine revelation as communicated in His life. He was a Teacher. As a Teacher sent from God He occupied a his-

torical position. His words of Divine and eternal truth, were spoken within the sphere of history. When He spoke on any occasion and with respect to any matter, there was and could be but one utterance. He must have used certain words and no other. He must have used exactly a certain number of words, neither more nor less. And He must have arranged His words in one and only in one order. And there was revelation in His words and their connection with realities in God, or in Himself, or in man, or in the world. What has to be noted, then, is that the Evangelists, in reporting the same utterances of Christ, introduce discrepancies in their different accounts of the sayings they ascribe to Him. Now the reports differ in the words they make Him say; now they differ as to the number of words they affirm He used; and, again, they differ as to the order in which they present His words as spoken. But in no instance is it possible to make out of such discrepancies an express or an implied departure from the truth of the Divine revelation given in Him, whose words were as the words of the Father.

To see that this is true, let us take a few instances. When one Evangelist omits from one of Christ's reported utterances, some words or

phrases given by another; or when he adds words or phrases to a reported utterance of Christ, not found in some other account of the same speech, it is at once apparent that such omission or addition is entirely consistent with the Gospels as trustworthy records of a perfect Divine revelation. And, therefore, such discrepancies need not be dwelt upon. But in cases where different Evangelists disagree as to the very words that they represent Christ as using on one and the same occasion, and words that have reference to what is most essential in Divine revelation, the absolute compatibility of such discrepancies with the perfection of the Divine revelation, may not be apparent to certain minds. Here, consequently, explanation may be required; and to reconcile the discrepancies with the perfection of the revelation as regards this point, is in effect as good as to harmonize the two on every other point of difficulty presented by Christ's reported sayings.

We may begin with the discrepancy shown by a comparison of Matthew v. 48 with Luke vi. 36. Matthew reports Christ as saying, "Be ye therefore perfect (τέλειοι), even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"; and Luke reports Him as saying, "Be ye therefore merciful

(οἰκτίρμονες), as your Father also is merciful." Here, then, is one of Christ's sayings. The saying is of such importance that it bears upon the chief end of revelation. If in reporting Christ's utterances verbal accuracy on the part of the Evangelists was in any instance demanded, it must have been required here. But such accuracy was not observed. Not only is there verbal discrepancy in the two reports of the exhortation, but the inaccuracy appears in the verbal account of what is most essential in it. Christ was exhorting his disciples to become like their heavenly Father; and according to Matthew He exhorted them to be perfect as God is; whereas according to Luke He exhorted them to be merciful as God is. But these two words—perfect and merciful—taken by themselves, do not both mean the same thing. And it is obvious that whichever of the two Evangelists was correct in his verbal report of what Christ said, the other must have been wrong. Yet notwithstanding this verbal discrepancy, there is perfect substantial accuracy in both forms of the exhortation. Either of the two words is in complete harmony with the chief end of revelation as contemplated in the utterance. For the chief end of revelation is to make men like the Father; and

they are like the Father when they are merciful, and when they are merciful as He is, they are perfect. According to the nature of Christ's teaching the merciful and the perfect are identical. And when in this instance, as in many others, different Evangelists agree in their report of Christ's meaning, while they ascribe to Him different words, this proves that what they aimed at in their reports was substantial rather than verbal accuracy.

One other illustration to the same effect may be given. In Matt. vii. 11 we have the saying, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." In Luke's report of the same utterance (xi. 13) there are several variations of a verbal kind; but the most important of these is in the last clause, where, instead of the words "good things" (ἀγαθὰ) as in Matthew, we have the words "the Holy Spirit" (Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον). But here, also, the two Evangelists report essentially the same meaning as expressed by Christ, while they differ as to the word or words employed by Him. If He said "good things," He did not say "Holy Spirit;" and if He said "Holy Spirit," He did not say "good

things." But whichever expression He did use, it substantially conveyed the meaning of the other. For what He promised in answer to prayer, was blessing. And in the kingdom of God, owing to the nature of its blessings, he possesses good things who possesses the Holy Spirit; and he who possesses the Holy Spirit possesses good things. In the possession of the Holy Spirit all good things are totalised.

In such ways, then, it is possible to reconcile all the discrepancies found in the reports of Christ's sayings, with the absolute truth of His teaching, and with the perfection of the Divine revelation. Now, however, we must pass on to the next branch of the subject.

Discrepancies and the Facts of Christ's History.

Many of the discrepancies in the Gospels owe any importance attaching to them, to their relation to facts in the History of Christ. We, therefore, go on to deal with the facts. And here two truths require to be established; first, that the discrepancies do not at all invalidate the credibility of any of the facts of Christ's history, in which Divine revelation was embodied; and, second, that they do not at all affect the revelation embodied in those facts. First, then, let us

consider the value of the discrepancies in relation to the credibility of the facts in the history of the self-manifestation of Christ.

It is well known that discrepancies, and even contradictions, in different circumstantial reports of the same leading fact, do not necessarily prove that the fact never occurred. In many instances the effect of the discrepancies, or contradictions, tends rather to add credibility to the main occurrence concerned. "The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety. This is what the daily experience of courts of justice teaches. When accounts of a transaction come from the mouths of different witnesses, it is seldom that it is not possible to pick out apparent or real inconsistencies between them. These inconsistencies are studiously displayed by an adverse pleader, but oftentimes with little impression upon the minds of the judges. On the contrary, a close minute agreement induces the suspicion of confederacy and fraud. When written histories touch upon the same scenes of action, the comparison almost always affords ground for a like reflection. Numerous, and sometimes important, variations present themselves; not seldom, also, absolute and final contradictions, yet neither one nor the

other are deemed sufficient to shake the credibility of the main fact."[1]

All this, then, is applicable to the principal facts recorded in the Gospels, and to the bearing upon them of the discrepancies, which are found only in points of detail and arrangement. In the various Gospels there is no trace of contradiction as to the actual occurrence of any fact in which revelation was embodied We do not find one Evangelist affirming and another denying, for example, the fact of the incarnation, or the fact of Christ's death, or the fact of His resurrection from the dead. Nor do we find one Evangelist gainsaying another respecting any other fact upon which dependence was to be placed for the knowledge of Christ and of the Father. Whatever discrepancy or contradiction exists in the Gospel records, in connection with any fact in which Christ was self-manifested and God revealed, the inaccuracy, in every instance, belongs to matters of mere detail, in which no actual revelation was embodied, and which were entirely incidental to the main occurrences in which the Divine revelation was given. In no case is the credibility of a fact pregnant with revelation, shaken or lessened by the discre-

[1] Paley's Evidences.

pancies apparent in the incidental circumstances related in the report of the occurrence.

What has been thus said is true of all the discrepancies that fall under the head of chronology. A critical comparison of the four Gospels at once reveals the fact, that many incidents must have been arranged in the report of one Evangelist, or else in that of another, in an order of sequence different from that in which they succeeded each other in the actual history. If, for instance, our Lord's temptation on the pinnacle of the temple preceded His temptation on the top of the high mountain, according to Matt. iv. 5-10; then Luke was chronologically inaccurate when, in his report, he reversed the order in which the two temptations happened (iv. 5-13). Again, if the anointing at Bethany took place six days before the Passover, as John reports (xii. 1-9), Matthew (xxvi. 1-13) and Mark (xiv. 1-9) committed a mistake in reporting it as having occurred only two days before the Passover.

But all the discrepancies, relating to facts in the history of Christ, do not fall under the head of chronology. What seems to lend importance to some of them, is their bearing upon some one or other of the leading events or main facts recorded in the Gospels. One instance of this

kind of discrepancy appears in accounts of what occurred at our Lord's baptism. Matthew relates that on the occasion a voice from heaven was heard saying, as if either to John the Baptist, or to the multitude present, or to both him and them, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (iii. 17); and yet Luke informs us that the voice, speaking to Christ directly and personally, said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (iii. 22). It is evident, of course, that both accounts of the party addressed by the voice cannot be literally accurate. If the voice spoke to Christ directly about Himself, it did not speak directly to any other party present about Him.

As another instance, we may take the reports of the miracle at Jericho. Towards the close of the week previous to His death, Christ visited this city on His way to Jerusalem; and there, an appeal having been made to His mercy, He in His compassion and power opened the eyes of the blind (Matt. xx. 29-34; Mark x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35-43). In the different accounts of this miracle, however, there are variations, one or two of which it seems quite impossible, as regards the letter of the narratives, to harmonize. The circumstances as related by Mark and Luke,

point to the conclusion, that only one blind man was enabled to see; whereas Matthew tells us that the eyes of two blind men were opened. Again, Matthew and Luke both affirm that the miracle was performed as Christ entered the city; while, on the other hand, it is affirmed by Mark that it was performed as He departed from the city.

Similar discrepancies are presented also in a comparative view of the reports of Christ's death and resurrection. Of the discrepancies in reports relating to His death, it will be sufficient to mention two. The indictment fixed over Christ's head on the cross was, according to Matthew, "This Is Jesus, The King Of The Jews;" according to Mark, "The King Of The Jews;" according to Luke, "This Is The King Of The Jews;" according to John, "Jesus Of Nazareth, The King Of The Jews." Further, it is said by Mark that Christ was crucified at the third hour (xv. 25), and by John that He was crucified at the sixth hour (xix. 14). As to the discrepancies in the circumstantial reports bearing upon the resurrection, one instance will be sufficient. We know from John xx. 19-29, that Thomas was not present among the rest of the Apostles in the room at Jerusalem when Christ appeared to them on the

evening of the resurrection. Therefore, as Judas was now dead, the number of Apostles present must have been only ten. But Luke reports the presence of the eleven (xxiv. 33), and Mark reports the same number (xvi. 14). That Luke's report has reference to the meeting on the evening of the resurrection, is evident from the context; and that Mark's report refers to the same meeting, is apparent from the words, that Christ "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen"—a reproof which was merited and required by none of the Apostles except Thomas after Christ had shown Himself to them on the occasion in question. So that here an incontestable inaccuracy is presented; and the discrepancy is made still greater by Paul when he says (1 Cor. xv. 5) that Christ after His resurrection "was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve;" which could never have occurred, for Judas being dead, there never were more than eleven Apostles to whom the Lord might show Himself, during the interval between His resurrection and His ascension.

Thus, then, we have selected a few instances of the apparent discrepancies, contained in the details of the Gospel records, where important

occurrences are described. And what remains now to be done is, to note the effect that such discrepancies have as regards the credibility of the leading facts to which they are related. The position taken up by unbelieving critics is, that their effect is to destroy or lessen the credibility of these facts. But this position is unfair, unreasonable, and contrary to ordinary experience of the value of evidence bearing upon facts and upon the relation to facts of circumstantial reports concerning them. In order to defend the credibility of the main facts in the history of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels, despite the existence of a few discrepancies in the details of the record, it is not necessary in our argument to deal with more facts than one. In the case of all the facts, such as our Lord's temptations, the miracle at Jericho, His death, and His resurrection, the principle and method of defence are the same. Admitting the existence of discrepancy here and there in connection with such facts, what requires to be shown is, that such discrepancy is, on grounds of reason and experience, so far from destroying or lessening the credibility of the facts, that it rather upholds and strengthens it. Let us show this in connection with the fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

His resurrection from the dead, as an actual occurrence, is a matter of supreme moment in its value as historical evidence for the reality of the supernatural element in Christianity. Paul was perfectly aware of this, and therefore said, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14). And modern unbelievers as to the supernatural element in Christianity, are perfectly aware of it too: a circumstance which explains the determined and persistent opposition they have directed against the fact of the resurrection, and the various theories they have invented to explain it away as an actual historical occurrence. Hence, also, in order to strengthen their opposition, they have tried to reinforce their arguments and theories from the apparent discrepancies they have found, or imagined they have found, in the various Gospel records of the resurrection, and of the various appearances of the Lord to His disciples after the event. They have multiplied the discrepancies; they have done all in their power to make them seem irreconcilable with each other; and thus they have sought to construct them into a forcible proof that Christ's actual resurrection from the dead never happened.

But in this argument there is no real validity.

In the records of the resurrection the amount of actual discrepancy is smaller than has often been represented. And even although, after the utmost has been done to harmonise the variations, a few points of disagreement and a few slight inaccuracies still remain, the credibility of the great fact to which they relate is left untouched by them. The four Evangelists and Paul all agree in testifying to the occurrence of the fact with much fulness of detail, without any contradiction in points of substantial importance; and, consequently, even although, as regards minute incidental circumstances, the different accounts had shown a larger amount of discrepancy or inaccuracy than they do, the effect would have been, not to lessen the evidence that Christ rose again from the dead, but, if anything, to add corroboration to that evidence.

The presence of a certain amount of apparent discrepancy in the various reports of the resurrection, is a phenomenon which should not cause the least surprise to any one. Certainly, it will cause surprise to no one who duly considers the extraordinary nature of the event, the fact that it was unexpected on the part of the Apostles and other disciples, and the bewildering excitement and joy that it created among them; and who

remembers, also, that no circumstantial account of it was written until some years after its occurrence, and that when it happened and for long afterwards, that which mainly filled men's thoughts would be, not so much mere points of incidental detail, but the glorious and inspiring fact itself, that the Lord was risen indeed. In view of these considerations, and in view of the fact that the incidental details in the circumstances, connected with the resurrection, were so numerous, so intricate, and in many instances so strange, the astonishing thing is, that all the various accounts we have in the New Testament, approach so near to the point of being capable of what might fairly be taken for a complete probable reconciliation.

As it is, we are indebted even to the discrepancies for one form of evidence in favour of the resurrection, which, though negative in its nature, is of very great value. They are a demonstration of the absence of confederacy and fraud from the various records of the event. They are a distinct and cogent proof of a considerable amount of independence among the sacred writers who related the event. They render it impossible for any one to bring the charge against them of having agreed to deceive

their readers, by leading them to believe that to be a stupendous fact which they themselves knew to be only a fiction. Hence, the real value of the discrepancies, related to this fact, is an important contribution, not to the proofs that are offered against the credibility of the fact, but to the evidence for it. And for this reason God might allow these discrepancies to find a place in the records, testifying to the resurrection, that the testimony to an event so pregnant in its meaning and bearing might not be without a form of support, which usually belongs to the character of human testimony—the nature of this testimony being substantial truth under circumstantial variety. "Discrepancies belong to the realities of human historical literature. They give a peculiar verisimilitude to documents that are really historical, and they have a recognised value as evidence. In building up the historical argument, great strength arises by being able to cite independent witnesses." And "among the proofs that one narrative is independent of another, discrepancies between them in minor things holds a place."[1]

The credibility of the fact of the resurrection, then, is not shaken, but rather confirmed, by the

[1] "The Bible and Criticism." Principal Rainy.

discrepancies in the sacred records of it. The fact may be regarded as all the more certain, because it has the testimony of various writers who are not entirely at one on all points of incidental detail, while they are fully agreed as to all that is essential in their narratives. At any rate, it is saying the least to affirm, that it is entirely in accordance both with sound judgment and common experience, to maintain the perfect trustworthiness of the records of Christ's resurrection from the dead, notwithstanding such discrepancies as can be proved to exist in them. The credibility of many other historical documents is regarded as undoubted, although discrepancies or inaccuracies of a similar nature, and even graver, are apparent in them. One instance may be quoted. "Lord Clarendon states that the Marquis of Argyle was condemned to be *hanged*, which sentence was executed the *same* day: *four* other historians affirm that he was *beheaded* on the *Monday*, having been condemned on the *preceding Saturday;* yet this contradiction never led any person to doubt whether the Marquis was executed or not." [1]

[1] "Introduction to the Scriptures." Horne. Paley gives the same instance.

If, then, the discrepancies do not lessen the trustworthiness of the main facts in the Gospel history, this is all that we have been seeking to prove. But these facts require to be considered not only in their aspect as occurrences, which might or might not possess a sufficient amount of credibility. They have also to be considered as facts embodying Divine revelation. And we have now to inquire whether the discrepancies related to them affect in any sense or to any extent the revelation given in them.

Discrepancies and the Revelation Embodied in the Facts of Christ's History.

In the history of the self-manifestation of Christ, as the Revealer of God, there were some specially outstanding, important, representative facts; and it was mainly in these that the fulness of the Divine revelation was given. Such facts were those of the incarnation, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ. All the other facts in His personal history contained revelation, but in the numerous minor facts of His life the revelation was given rather in details, whereas in the major facts it was more summarised. The smaller facts shed light for us

upon the larger ones. And the light concentrated in the larger ones helps us to discover the fulness of the Divine significance in the smaller ones. But as embodiments of Divine revelation the major, the great representative, facts excel in value. And therefore Paul, who has given to us so complete an interpretation of the revelation of God in Christ, succeeded in doing this, although he had so little to say about the details of Christ's life, because he knew and studied the leading facts of His history and was inspired to apprehend their meaning.

Let us, then, test the value of the discrepancies in their relation to the revelation embodied in the facts, especially the larger facts, in the personal history of Christ.

Here also we shall deal only with a few cases as examples, dwelling especially on the resurrection of Christ.

Christ's temptations, for example, were facts in His life and experience; and He manifested Himself and revealed God in certain aspects by the manner in which He met and overcame them. So far, then, as Divine revelation was given in connection with His temptations, it was embodied in two things—in the nature of His temptations themselves and in the way in

which He resisted and obtained victory over them. Such a thing as the order in which two temptations occurred, which happened near to each other in point of time, was purely incidental to the revelation given in them, and did not at all affect it. Hence, although two Evangelists, in reporting the occurrence of two such temptations, happened each to assign a different order to them in point of chronological sequence, the revelation given in them would remain in every respect substantially the same, as it would have done, supposing that both Evangelists had reported the two temptations with chronological accuracy. All this applies, then, to the two temptations already noticed. Either Matthew or Luke must have been chronologically inaccurate as to the order in which he placed the temptations in his narrative. But this introduced no inaccuracy into either record of the two temptations as facts in and through which Divine revelation was conveyed. Despite the discrepancy as to the order in which they have been narrated, we may learn from them all the spiritual truth embodied in them or suggested by them.

To the difference in point of time assigned by John to the anointing at Bethany, as compared

with the accounts of Matthew and Mark, the same kind of reasoning and explanation applies. It applies also to the discrepancies apparent in the various records of the miracle at Jericho, and to their relation to the work of mercy as a revelation. This miracle, like so many more of our Lord's wonderful works, was a work of Divine compassion, performed for the relief of human suffering, in response to an appeal for help and mercy. In substance, then, that which was revealed in the miracle was the mighty all-helpful compassion of God in Christ, effecting the deliverance of a human sufferer. And the Divine compassion was revealed all the same at Jericho, whether the eyes of two men were opened, or the eyes of only one, and whether the east end or the west end of the city was the locality where the Divine compassion was displayed.

In a similar way the verbal variations in the two reports of what the voice from heaven said on the occasion of Christ's baptism, are capable of being reconciled with the substantial truth of the revelation involved in the testimony borne concerning Him. The voice must have said either "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased," or, "This is My beloved Son in

whom I am well pleased." But in either case the testimony was the same in point of effect, as it probably was the same also in the Divine intention. In either case the testimony was calculated to meet the requirements alike of Christ Himself, of John the Baptist, and of the multitude present on the occasion. The testimony was fitted to produce on the mind of the multitude a good impression in favour of Him who was about to enter upon His public career as the Messiah. It was fitted to confirm the faith of the Baptist in Christ as the Messiah for whom he was preparing the way. And it was fitted to inspire Christ Himself with fresh encouragement to begin His public task.

The discrepancies in the records of Christ's death and their bearing on the revelation of the cross, are to be explained in the same manner. The cross is the central fact in the history of Christ's self-manifestation, as the Revealer of God; and in it God was revealed as a God of holy and gracious love. The cross was the scene where the Divine love was pre-eminently manifested. The revelation, moreover, it requires to be remembered, was given in the fact itself, in connection with the causes which issued in His death, and in the manner in which He submitted

to it. The revelation was not given in the merely circumstantial and incidental details in the history of His Passion, to which alone, and only to a few of which, the alleged discrepancies belong. It matters nothing, for example, as regards the revelation, what were the exact words in the indictment which the Roman soldiers affixed to the cross. It matters nothing whether it was the third hour or the sixth hour when Christ was crucified. And what is true of these, is equally true of every other apparent discrepancy traceable, or imagined to exist, in the narratives of the Passion. There is not so much as one discrepancy in matters or statements in which Divine revelation is or was embodied and conveyed. The revelation was given, and given in all its glorious completeness and effulgence, in the great Passion-event itself—in the marvellously significant and complicated causes to which this event is to be referred, and in the manner in which Christ proved Himself obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It was thus that the revelation of the Divine love, as embodied in the cross, was communicated in all its plenitude and splendour. And in the sacred records of the revelation, as thus communicated, absolutely no trace of discrepancy is to be found.

And this revelation, the few slight discrepancies found in the record, no more affect, than a few particles of dust in the air affect the sun shining in the heavens at noonday.

But let us now come to the resurrection of Christ. We have seen that the discrepancies in the narratives of the event do not weaken the testimony of the writers to it as an actual occurrence. But the fact of the resurrection, like the fact of the death of Christ, is replete with revelation; and in the case of the former, as in the case of the latter, as remains now to be shown, the revelation is in no way distorted or dimmed by the variations and inaccuracies in the records of it.

It is important to observe here, and to emphasise the fact, that there was Divine revelation embodied in the resurrection. Each of the representative facts in the history of Christ contained certain aspects of revelation somewhat peculiar to itself. So with the great fact now before us. All the revelation embodied in previous facts was presupposed by it; but it added some new features to the disclosures of the Divine will and purpose already made. The nature of the revelation embodied specially in it, was apprehended by the Apostles. The fact

itself, but more especially its significance and bearings, constituted a great part of the Gospel they preached. As the fact of the death of Christ was preached by them as the Gospel of Divine love to the world, so the fact of His resurrection was preached as the Gospel of Divine hope for the world. They saw in the resurrection a special revelation of the truth of Christ's claim to be the Son of God (Rom. i. 4). They saw in it a special revelation of the truth that man is immortal, and that death does not end all with him (1 Cor. xv. 12-32; 2 Tim. i. 10). They saw in it a special revelation, both of the possibility and of the certainty of the resurrection of the dead in Christ, to everlasting life and glory (1 Cor. xv.; 1 Peter i. 3, 4). They saw in it a special revelation of a glorious destiny in store for the entire universe (Rom. viii. 11-19; 1 Cor. xv. 23-28).

But this revelation, let it next be observed, was given, and given complete, in the event of the resurrection itself. And as so given, it lies far beyond the possibility of being affected by any of the discrepancies in the reports of incidents connected with the occurrence. Given the fact itself, and the entire revelation that has inspired so many men with a blessed hope

and opened up such a glorious prospect for the universe, is communicated in it and with it. All the accounts of this fact, contained in the New Testament, concur in bearing testimony to it as having happened; and none of them are at variance. On the contrary, all of them are in perfect agreement as to the elements of special revelation embodied in the fact. And this being so, the discrepancies in their relation to the revelation are, and must for ever remain, absolutely harmless. The fact of the resurrection, moreover, with all its grand and mighty import has entered into human history. For many centuries it has, along with other Christian forces, been shaping the destinies of man and of the world. And to urge the discrepancies in the sacred records of the event against either the credibility or the meaning of the fact, is as vain as an effort would be to turn the tide of the Atlantic with the lash of a straw.

And so in regard to the entire body of Divine revelation contained in the Bible. Its nature is such that it never can be affected by any of the discrepancies observed in its record; its perfection is such, that it can never be impaired by them. It is most unreasonable on the part of any person to look upon the discrepancies

as a valid reason for denying the Bible to be the Word of God. And it is exceedingly unwise on the part of anyone, either to imagine that there can be no discrepancies in the Bible because it is the Word of God, or to tremble for it as God's Word, when it is alleged that it is not free from that kind of imperfection.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BIBLE AND ITS PHENOMENA.

HITHERTO our study of revelation and the Bible has been analytical. In the course of the analysis we have examined the revelation in relation to its object, to its historical element, to its record, and to the discrepancies in its record. But it has to be remembered that all the various parts of the analysis meet in the one book—the Bible. The sacred Scriptures are a synthesis. They are one record in which the Divine revelation was committed to writing, and by means of which it has been preserved, from age to age, within the knowledge of man. Let us, therefore, pass on now to examine the character of the Bible in its synthetic aspects. What are its phenomena? After answering this question in the present chapter, we shall be ready to consider, in the following ones, the question of its attributes.

Two Fundamental Elements in the Bible.

The Bible as a body of sacred literature possesses numerous and extremely diversified phenomena. It is this feature of the Book that has given rise to the conflicting opinions so often entertained regarding it. All the various phenomena of the Bible spring from two fundamental elements, and are to be explained by reference to them. As the Word of God, it contains a Divine element; and as the Word of God written by men, it contains a human element. In the Scriptures these two elements come together; and in doing so they unite and form one general result. And sometimes it is from one of them, sometimes from the other, and sometimes from both of them as united, that the immense number and variety of the minor points and features of the written Word arise. It follows, therefore, that in order to be able to form a just and enlightened judgment regarding the character of the Bible, one must rest his conclusions upon certain obvious truths that are implied by the presence of these two elements in it, and by the way in which they are combined or interblended. It will help to render the truths in question more conspicuous, if we, in the first place, gather light from one or two analogies.

Two Fundamental Elements in Man's Nature and in Christ's Person.

The two fundamental elements in the Bible may be compared to the two fundamental elements in man's nature. The two great constituents of his nature are matter and mind. In him these two elements meet. His nature is the result of the union of the two. The result of the union is one product. And in this one product is presented an assemblage of phenomena which is wondrously large and diverse. But we must examine this analogy somewhat more particularly. One of the elements in man's nature is matter; and a vast number of the phenomena of his nature are determined by this element alone. From this alone spring all the chemical, biological, and physiological facts, processes, and laws, belonging to the material and animal conditions and arrangements of his existence and life. And what is thus known regarding the material, holds good also of the mental, element in his nature. It is from this that the various orders of mental phenomena arise; such as those of reason, of conscience, of self-determination, and of spiritual aspiration and effort. But in man's nature and life the

phenomena of matter and those of mind do not exist apart from each other. Matter and mind, the sources of the two different classes of phenomena, meet and are united in his nature; and, in consequence, the phenomena arising from them are to a large extent intermixed. For instance, to explain thought as a product we must admit material as well as mental phenomena into the analysis. It is known to us as a result from both material and mental conditions and processes. Moreover, in the interests of the truth as to man's nature, it becomes us duly to acknowledge and respect all the various orders of phenomena belonging to it. The material as well as the mental side of his nature is the work of his good and all-wise Creator. And every phenomenon, both material and mental, is in some way or other an expression of God's will; a result from the operation of forces that have their source in the fountain of His omnipotence; a thing which conforms to laws that He has ordained. It would not honour God, therefore, but it would dishonour Him, if we ignored, or denied, or attempted to explain away the material phenomena of man's nature, in order to emphasise the value of the mental element in it;

or if we did so as to the mental phenomena in his nature, in order to emphasise the value of the material element in it.

The two fundamental elements in the Bible may be compared, also, to the two fundamental elements in the Person of Christ. The two natures, the Divine and the human, meet in Him. His Person is the result of the union of the two; for He is only one Person, notwithstanding that He possesses both the nature of God and the nature of man. Hence, during the time and under the conditions of His personal life in the world, He presented two very different orders of phenomena, the one order being determined by what He was as God, and the other by what He was as man. Many things in His life, such as His complete oneness of will, of purpose, of spirit with the Father, were phases and manifestations of His Divine nature; and many things, such as His tears and moral struggles, were phases and manifestations of His human nature. In His Person, moreover, there was a union of the Divine element with the human; and, consequently, also an extensive and strange intermixture of the phenomena of His Divinity with the features and phases of His humanity. In the phenomena of His

Passion, for instance, we see Him both suffering humanly and triumphing Divinely. And, besides, as in the case of man's nature, so in the case of Christ's Person, all the phenomena determined respectively by the two elements in it claim due acknowledgment and respect. Both in His human nature and in His Divine nature He is the Son of God in one Person, and the world's Saviour. All that was human as well as all that was Divine in His life and experience on earth, was in accordance with the will and eternal purpose of the Father. We should, therefore, dishonour His Divinity if we sought to honour it at the expense of any of the human features in His nature and life; and it would be false to His humanity to try to honour it at the expense of anything in His nature and life that was due to His being Divine.

The Divine and the Human Elements in the Bible.

These two analogies, then, will help to render quite obvious some of the more important truths implied by the existence in the Bible of the Divine and the human elements. The Bible in all its phenomena and attributes is the product

of these two elements, and each of them has contributed its own indispensable share towards the one indivisible result. Accordingly, as in the case of man's nature and in that of the Person of Christ, the numerous and diverse phases and features of the Bible are due to the two great factors in its composition. Many of the phenomena spring from the Divine factor, and many from the human factor. That it is so, becomes manifest when the Bible is honestly and believingly examined and studied. And, on the other hand, to admit that the Bible does consist of both a Divine and a human element is, implicitly, if not also avowedly, to admit that it must present two great classes of diverse phenomena, corresponding respectively to these diverse elements. In other words, it must be held, as the Bible is the Word of God written, that it must have in it points and features such as can be explained only by referring them to the Divine origin and the Divine purpose of the Scriptures. And, on the other hand, it must also be held, as it is the Word of God written by men, that it must have other points and features in it, which arose from what the men were who penned it, and from the manner in which they did their work.

But the Bible resembles man's nature and the

Person of Christ in another way. There is in it an interblending of the two fundamental elements, as happens in the relation of the material to the mental in man's nature, and as happened in the relation of the human to the Divine in Christ's Person. In the Bible the Divine and the human elements do not exist apart from each other, or side by side. They do not run along lines of mere parallel relation to each other, from the beginning to the end of the Book. They come together in an internal relation. The Divine is embodied in the human. The letter sinks into the spirit, and the spirit is transfused through the letter. And hence, in the Bible, as in man's nature and Christ's Person, there is an interblending of phenomena. Human features vanish in Divine ones; Divine features vanish in human ones. The same Scriptures that are God's Word are men's writings. And there are in them many indications that belong to them as the Word of God, and many other indications that belong to them as the writings of men.

And all this is suggestive of an admonition. We have seen that all the phenomena of man's nature, both material and mental, and all the phenomena of Christ's Person, both Divine and human, should receive due acknowledgment and

respect. Is the same tribute, then, not due also to all the phenomena of the Bible? The Bible is God's Word written; and it may be taken as certain by every believer, that the Bible we possess is the record of the Divine revelation that He, in His wisdom and providence, has seen fit to provide and preserve for us, as the best. Had we needed another or a better Bible He would not have left this need unsupplied. Therefore, all the qualities and features of God's Word, as written by men, demand that we should own and esteem them: or rather, this demand is made by God. His goodness, His wisdom, and His providence extend to that which is human in the Bible, as well as to that which is Divine. It is a Divine provision, and it is this veritably as to all the phenomena that have sprung up from its Divine and human roots. No fact or truth belonging to it requires, as regards its interests or its honour, to be ignored, or explained away, or denied. God must have known that it would be able to bear the responsibility of all that in its character, which He Himself, as its Divine author, stamped upon it; and of all that which He has permitted to be stamped upon it by its human authors, its transcribers, and its translators. Hence, none of its Divine features requires to be

emphasised and honoured at the expense of any of its human phases. To sacrifice any of its human phenomena, for the sake of its Divine character, is to dishonour God. Its human features are to its Divine character as the husk is to the kernel. They are the windows through which the Divine revelation shines. They are stepping stones up into the heights of that knowledge of God which is life everlasting.

Now, however, we must proceed to glance more particularly at some of the diversified phenomena of the Bible.

Instances of the Diverse Phenomena of the Bible.

A complete classification of the phenomena of the Bible is not necessary for our purpose. Nor, indeed, is it possible for such a classification to be made; for the Divine and the human elements in it are so united and interfused, that in many instances that which appears as human is rooted in the Divine, and that which appears as Divine blossoms in the human. In the case of man's nature, it is impossible always to say where the phenomena of matter end, and the phenomena of mind begin. In the case of Christ's Person, it is equally impossible always to say where the

human phenomena end, and the Divine phenomena begin. And there is a like impossibility as to the phenomena of the Bible. All those points and features in it, which spring from its Divine element, appear in a human result; and all those points and features in it, which spring from its human element, are interfused with a Divine result. And this is one reason why infinite consideration, extreme caution, and the profoundest humility, are required on the part of those who inquire into, and undertake to pronounce judgment upon, the attributes of the Sacred Scriptures.

Necessarily, then, only a superficial account of the various phenomena of the Bible can be given. It is to be set down among the leading features of the Book, that it possesses the two fundamental elements to which attention has just been given. It is a book of both Divine and human authorship, in which are combined the results of both Divine and human thinking, action, and design. Its phenomena include all the aspects it bears as a book containing a Divine revelation. The origin, the necessity for, the method of, the history, the nature, the purpose, the practical results of the revelation, all have impressed distinct and apparent marks upon the Bible as its

record. Then, again, the diversity of phenomena in the record itself is simply endless. Let us, however, go further into detail.

One of the phases of the Bible is its subject-matter. It contains a revelation of God in His relation to nature, to man, and to human destiny. Its general theme is redemption. It unfolds the nature of God's redeeming purpose; and it explains the nature of redemption, and the methods pursued by God with a view to its accomplishment. It relates the history of redemption as it transpired, from time to time, in the doings of God as present among men; and as working among them and in them in His righteousness and grace. It explains the significance of the Divine doings in their bearings upon redemption. It is a record of redemption as seeking to issue in the present life in the salvation of sinners, in spiritual religion, and in perfect morality. It is a prophecy of the issues of redemption in the kingdom of God upon the earth, and in its consummation in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. But while this is the general theme of the Bible, it is a book in which all human interests, those for time as well as those for eternity, are abundantly reflected. Its con-

tents are rich in matters of history, biography, genealogy, travel, legislation, politics, war; and it concerns itself with all kinds of affairs in private, in social, in national, and in ecclesiastical life.

Among the phenomena of the Bible, moreover, have to be reckoned its literary aspects. In this respect its manifoldness is marvellous. It displays a wealth of literary variety and excellence, compared with which every other collection of literary products, of a like extent, is poor, and low in the scale of merit. "Independently of its Divine origin, it contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written."[1] The literary wealth and variety of the Bible have been plentifully revealed in the influence which it has exerted upon the minds of men and upon human conduct, as an instrument of culture. To literature, more than to any other ordinary force, the progress of human culture has been due; and the throne of literary influence has been occupied by the Bible. It is a mistake to

[1] Found written on the blank leaf of the Bible of Sir William Jones, a writer on Oriental subjects.

ascribe to the literature of Greece and Rome the honour of having been the sole instrumentality in promoting intellectual culture, and to award to the Bible the honour of being instrumental only in the religious advancement of mankind. Intellectual culture, undoubtedly, owes much to the writings of Greek and Roman authors; but it owes much, it owes far more, directly and indirectly, to the Bible; while at the same time, as an influence making for religious culture, the Bible has been supreme. Nor is that the whole truth: for the reason why the Bible has been supreme, as an influence making for religious culture, is that it has been supreme, as an influence making for intellectual culture. Under the influence of the Bible, the intellectual and the religious culture of men have advanced hand in hand. Every period in history, distinguished as a period of profound and extensive religious awakening and progress, springing from the influence of the Bible, has proved to be, at the same time, a period of deep and widespread intellectual awakening and progress. The influence of the Bible upon man's life, intellectually, affects him religiously; and its influence upon his life, religiously, affects him intellectually. And as regards this double and reciprocal in-

fluence upon man and upon human culture, the Bible as a literature stands alone, unapproached and unapproachable in its pre-eminence.

As an instrument of real culture, the Bible is diversified up to the entire extent of man's need. It surpasses all other books, or collections of books, in its exalted influence on the imagination. No other book has done so much to awaken man's mind, and to bring it into the presence of realities of the intensest and grandest intellectual interest. Almost infinitely more than any other book, it has proved an instrument of culture as regards the human conscience. It is under the influence of the Bible that the powers of human judgment, of self-determination, of self-denial, of devotion to truth, to righteousness, to goodness, to the service of man, and to the glory of God, have been seen at their best. And to the influence of the Bible, we owe the cream of all that is best, noblest, most inspiring, in modern culture in all its forms,—in private, in social, in national, in cosmopolitan, in intellectual, as well as in moral and religious life. And if the question be asked, How does all this manifoldness of human culture result from the influence of the Bible? one important part of the answer to offer is, It results from the

manifoldness of the literary phenomena of the sacred Scriptures.

The Bible as a book to interest man covers the entire sphere of his life. It appeals to all that in his nature which is true universally, true for time, and true for eternity. It takes an infinite interest in all his needs and aspirations, in all his hopes and fears, in all his joys and sorrows. It brings him into the presence of thoughts, deep as eternity, infinite as God, real as his own existence. He learns from it the purpose of his existence and the meaning of his life. It helps him to discern the unseen that lies behind the visible, and the eternal that surrounds him amid the things of time. It promises him deliverance from all his sins; satisfaction for all his spiritual longings; compensation for all his earthly losses; eternal joys for all his tears; complete victory and the crown of life, as the reward of his love and loyalty to Christ and of his faithfulness unto death. It does all that, and more. It does it by means of its wondrous histories, of its magnificent prophecies, of its soaring and powerful poetry, of its stores of practical proverbial wisdom, and of its epistolary treasures. It does it as a record of great facts, of great truths, and of profound and rich spiritual experi-

ences; and as a record of momentous precepts, of priceless promises, of infinite encouragements, of gracious invitations, of tremendous warnings. And it does it with the truth, the love, the faithfulness, the gentleness, the severity of God.

But passing from these aspects of the Bible, we may now group together, somewhat miscellaneously, some other phenomena apparent on its surface. The Bible contains the truth of God, and all the truth that man requires to know and live by, in order to be saved, and in order to fulfil the ends of his existence and life. And in seeking to form correct opinions regarding the Bible, it is of much consequence for one to remember that God has not presented His truth to us in His Word, in the form of an abstract logical system. Had He presented the truth in this form, the character of the Bible would have been entirely different from what it is. Such a Bible would have had some advantages. It is probable that it would have been much less provocative of certain kinds of criticism than the one we possess. And it is probable, further, that less difficulty would have been presented by it as to questions bearing upon inspiration, infallibility, and truths which must be believed, as compared with those which may, or may not,

be believed, in order to be a Christian. But with all these seeming advantages, such a Bible would have been much less adapted to God's purposes and to man's needs, than the one we have: and we know for certain that this is true, because we know that God Himself must have been the best judge of what would be the best Bible; and we have confidence in Him that He would not fail to provide that Bible which He judged to be the best.

The Bible that He has provided, then, is a record of life, of action, of movements among personal beings; movements in which persons in the supernatural world come into relation with persons in the natural world; movements in which God deals with men, good and bad, and in which both good and bad men act with reference to God and to one another. It is a record of movements in which all the attributes of God's character come into play, in the form of judgments among men; and in which all that is good and wise in human life, and all that is bad and foolish, find scope for expression and effect. Necessarily, then, all this has done much towards giving character to the Bible. It has determined the concrete and popular form into which so much of its substance has been cast;

and it has determined the immense number and the great variety of the persons represented as acting and speaking in that wonderful world of life and movement into which it introduces us. Often the actor or speaker is God; and sometimes He acts or speaks with reference to good, and sometimes with reference to wicked, men. Often the actors or speakers are angels from heaven. Often the actor or speaker is Christ, and sometimes He is the Spirit of God. Occasionally the actions and words recorded are those of Satan. Very often those who act or speak are righteous men, and men inspired by God. And not seldom the stage of action and speech, disclosed by the Word of God, is occupied by men resisting His will, counteracting His purposes, the enemies of truth and righteousness. In the Bible, therefore, there is much that is not of God; though it is there with His permission, and in accordance with His will and design, as the Divine author of the Book, and for purposes of edification. It records many words contrary to the truth of God, and many actions contrary to the righteousness of God. As a record of life and movement in a world where the history of action and speech is essentially moral, and where truth and error, right and wrong, meet in con-

flict, the Bible, which deals with this moral history, is by necessity a book of light and shade. And the shade has been introduced to it for the sake of the light; the error has been recorded in the interests of the truth; and the wrong has been recorded to help towards the complete and eternal triumph of righteousness.

Hence, all the contents of the Bible, as regards details, are not of the same absolute value. There are some portions of Scripture which are never read at family worship or in public, where discretion is used. The book of Genesis is of more value than the book of Esther. The epistle of Jude is of less value than the epistle to the Romans. The contents of even the same book are not all of the same value. The book of Job is rich in diversity of this kind. There are many features of immense value in the book, as a portion of God's Word. To read it with appreciation is to breathe the air of Divine inspiration. Yet all the utterances contained in it are not true, either to the real experience of human life, or to the realities of the moral government of God. Though the words of Job's three friends are recorded in a Divinely-inspired book, it would be madness to deny that many of them were not words inspired by the Spirit of God. The argu-

ments to prove that Job must have been a great sinner because he was a great sufferer were inconclusive. And so there was much truth in the words that Job addressed to his counsellors, "Ye are forgers of lies; ye are physicians of no value" (xiii. 3). But even some of Job's own words, as recorded in the book, are full of spiritual ignorance and error, and the effect of much of his reasoning was to justify himself rather than God (xxxii. 2). He himself confessed, after the light had dawned upon him, that he had uttered that he understood not; things too wonderful for him, which he knew not: and in consequence of his errors he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes (xlii. 3, 6).

What is thus true of the contents of the book of Job, is true less or more of other books of Scripture. Even the Gospels, which contain so many of the utterances of Christ, the personal Truth, record also many sayings, some of those, for instance, of Scribes and Pharisees, which are contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Conclusion.

This brief and imperfect sketch of the phenomena of the Bible may now be drawn to a

close. These phenomena, it requires to be remembered, are inherent in its character. They belong to it and cannot be separated from it as a Book. It is impossible for us to succeed without observing them and weighing their significance, if we would know the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, about the Scriptures. We must distinguish, moreover, between the phenomena of the Bible and its attributes. Both enter into its character. And it is upon a knowledge of the former that a knowledge of the latter must be built up. We cannot form an intelligent conception of its attributes, unless we keep in view and justly estimate the value of the diverse and numerous phenomena that pervade it. And one thing we may expect as certain is this—to find the truth regarding the attributes of the Bible in the region of paradox, in the region of seeming, though not real, contradiction. Since the Bible has in it, as its two great component parts, both a Divine and a human element; and also all the various kinds of phenomena that have arisen from these elements and entered as inherent features into the character of the Book; we have no more reason to expect to find the truth regarding its attributes free from apparent contradiction, than we have reason to expect to find such contra-

diction absent from the truth regarding the attributes of man's nature or from the truth regarding the attributes of Christ's Person. The truth regarding the attributes of the Bible is not so easy to arrive at, as many have supposed. And to feel this difficulty is necessary as a preparation for setting out in quest of this truth.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PERFECTION AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE AND THEIR LIMITATIONS.

In order to arrive at a correct knowledge of the attributes of the Bible, it will help us if we make some use of illustrations drawn from the analogies employed in last chapter to explain its phenomena. It will appear, both from man's nature and from Christ's Person, that we should be prepared to find the Bible possessing—owing to its two fundamental elements—attributes opposite to each other in their nature, and seeming, when viewed on the surface, to involve what might be mistaken for real contradictions.

Contrary Attributes are Inherent in Man's Nature and in Christ's Person.

As has been already observed, man's nature is fundamentally constituted of two factors—matter and mind. From this it arises that two contrary sets of attributes are possessed by him. Between matter and mind, as known to us, there

is acknowledged to be a wide gulf. What the essence of matter is, and the essence of mind, neither human observation, nor scientific experiment, nor speculative philosophy, has been able to define or explain. All that is known is, that the stuff of the one must be very far from being of the same kind as the substance of the other. Because of this difference, then, between the two substances each of them possesses attributes that are correspondingly different from those of the other; and, indeed, it is from the differences presented by their respective attributes or properties, that the essential difference between the two factors themselves is inferred. The attributes of mind are wholly unlike those of matter in every one of the forms under which the latter exists. The attributes of the one cannot be expressed in terms of the other. Hence, although the radical difference between them has never received and never may receive a full and satisfactory positive definition, on account of the limitations of human knowledge, it has been common to define mind negatively as immaterial, as that which is not material, as that which belongs to a totally different category of being from matter.

To man's nature, therefore, as being a product

of both matter and mind, belong two different sets of attributes, corresponding respectively to these two substances. He is endowed with material attributes on the organic side of his nature; and he is endowed with mental attributes on the mental side of his nature. For the sake of simplicity, let us take only one illustration of the opposition of the material to the mental attributes with which man is endowed. He is both mortal and immortal. He is mortal because there is organised matter in his nature; and he is immortal because there is mind in his nature. That which is material in his nature involves him sooner or later in dissolution; that which is mental in his nature destines him for eternity. With respect to his nature, therefore, we have to believe that what is true of it on one side, may not be true of it on the other. We have to go further than that, and affirm that to be true of it on one side, which we deny as true of it on the other. We have to express the whole truth as to his nature in apparent contradictions; we have to say that he is both mortal and immortal. And this is the doctrine of orthodoxy. Besides universal experience of what happens to man as possessing an organic constitution and living an organic

life, there are scientific considerations which render it impossible for any sane person to deny that man is mortal. But the denial of his immortality is a common heresy. And looking at his nature from a theoretic point of view, this heresy possesses some advantage. It helps to reduce the amount of apparent contradiction involved in the attributes of human nature, as this last is viewed from the orthodox standpoint. But here orthodoxy has the boldness to face the admission of contradiction. It holds that both mortality and immortality are attributes of the same nature. Here it has wisdom to distinguish between things that differ. Here it has insight to discern, and reasonableness to teach, that man is mortal for certain reasons; and that for reasons of a very different kind, he is also immortal. It does not deny or try to explain away one side of the contradiction in order to remove traces of seeming incompatibility. It has respect enough for the whole truth to accept it as consisting in paradox. And this is to its praise.

When we turn to the Person of Christ and to His attributes as the God-man, we find the same kind of reasoning holding good. Some of His attributes were proper to the Divine side of His personality, while others were proper to the

human side. And in the case of His attributes, as in the case of those of man's nature, the whole truth lies in the affirmation of opposite truths, which a mere theorist might hold to be actually irreconcilable. The opposite attributes claimed by Christ and for Him, have ever been a stumbling-block to certain thinkers. And in order to eliminate all contradiction or paradox from the truth concerning them, various theories have been set up during the history of inquiry on the subject of Christology. In the earlier stages of the history, the real humanity of the Son of God was denied, and His outward manifestation on earth explained in such wise as to support this negation. "The favourite notion of Oriental fancy, and which had long gained currency among the Jews, that a higher spirit has the faculty of presenting himself to the outward eye in various delusive though sensible forms, but possessing no reality of substance, was applied to Christ. One entire and important part of His earthly existence and of His personal being was criticised and explained away; His whole humanity was denied, and made to be a mere deceptive show, a mere vision."[1] But this extreme to which Gnosticism had recourse in

[1] Neander.

order to remove contradiction from the personal attributes of Christ, did not survive very long as an element of hostility to the orthodox faith. The opposite extreme is represented by Unitarianism; which leaves Christ in possession of none of the attributes of Deity; but predicates of Him only such attributes as belong to humanity when at its best. He was a mere man, although the best of men, filled more than any other man with the pure spirit of truth, wisdom, and goodness. And thus, according to this theory, no contradiction remains among the personal attributes of Christ, because by the denial of His Godhead the condition of such contradiction is taken out of the way.

But here also orthodoxy steps in with all manner of readiness to recognise, and all manner of courage to own, both the Divinity and the humanity of our Lord, and, consequently, to own the contradiction which exists among His attributes. No attribute of His Divinity is denied or explained away: on the contrary, every one of the attributes of Godhead are insisted upon as belonging to Him. No attribute of His humanity is denied or explained away; but here also every attribute, proper to human nature, is claimed for Him.

He was made in all points like as we are, sin excepted; His sinlessness rendering Him not less, but more, purely human, since sin has an entirely accidental relation to man's nature and life. Thus the eyes of orthodoxy are open to all the personal attributes of our Lord. It demands the acceptance of every one of them as an article of faith. To deny any one of them is a heresy. It is true they seem to involve contradictions. But the contradictions are not to be removed by denying either His humanity or His Godhead. They are to be accepted because He is Himself to be accepted, who is both God and man in one Person. We may not be able to explain or to see how the infinite and the finite, omnipotence and weakness, omniscience and certain limitations of knowledge, should have met in Him, the Eternal, when in the days of His flesh, he lived under the conditions of time. Still He was both God and man; and strangely paradoxical as it seems, both Divine and human attributes came together and united in His undivided Personality and in His marvellously simple life. Moreover, the evangelical faith includes the great and most precious truth, that the union of the human with the Divine, in the Person of Christ, in no wise involves dishonour

to His Godhead. However impossible it may be to reconcile the human attributes with the Divine attributes, as they met together in Him, it is held that the glory of the latter was untarnished by their contact with the former. Nothing in Him that was human needs to be gainsaid; nothing needs to be ignored; nothing needs to be got over by impossible explanations; in order to maintain, or to emphasise, or to extol anything in Him that was Divine. Orthodoxy glories, and has good cause to glory, in the Divinity, in the plenary Divinity, of Christ. And at the same time it can remain fearless, when the fullest and boldest testimony is borne to His humanity; and to everything that He humanly experienced, while on the earth, of growth in body, in mind, and in wisdom; of toil, effort and moral struggle; of sorrow and joy; of suffering and triumph.

All this, then, bears upon the attributes of the Bible.

The Bible possesses opposite Attributes.

In this respect God's Word resembles man's nature and Christ's Person. As being both a Divine and a human Book, it possesses two

different kinds of attributes. Some of its attributes belong to it as a Divine product; and others belong to it as a human product. It possesses both kinds of attributes by way of necessity. Attributes peculiar to it as a Divine product inevitably entered into its character. And it was inevitable that its character should be marked with attributes peculiar to it as a human product. Hence many things are true about it as having come from God, which are not true about it as a product of men; and on the other hand, many things are true about it as written by men, which are not true about it as having proceeded from God. In this respect it is with the Bible as it is with man's nature. In regard to the material side of his nature, it is true, as has been pointed out, that he is mortal; but this is not true of the mental side of his nature. Then, again, it is true to say of him, as possessing a reasonable soul, that he is immortal; but it would not be true to affirm immortality of his body. And it is with the Bible, also, in the aspect now before us, as it is with Christ's Person. It is true to say of His Divine nature that it existed from all eternity; but it would not be true to say that His human nature existed from all eternity. Again, the capability of dying was

one of the attributes of His human nature, while He lived on earth ; but it would be contrary to truth to say, that this attribute was possessed by His Divine nature. It is the same with the Bible. The same things have to be affirmed and denied regarding it, according to the point of view from which it is contemplated.

Now this possession by the Bible of contrary attributes is one of its great and glorious features. And those should be the last to deny or ignore it or any part of it, who accept the Bible and boast of it as the Word of God. They should be as ready to accept the whole truth about the Bible, and to glory in accepting it, as they are to accept with boasting the whole truth about man's nature, and the whole truth about Christ's Person. To ignore, or to deny, or to be afraid of any of the attributes of the Bible, or of any of its features, is a matter they should leave to the enemies of a special Divine revelation. Those who accept the Bible as God's Word written by men, take up a position inconsistent with faith in God and with true reverence for Him and for His revelation, when they shut their eyes to any truth whatsoever about His Word ; or when they deny any truth concerning it, whether that truth belongs to its character as a Divine product, or to

its character as a human product. The real interests of the Bible can never suffer from the open and honest admission of all that is true regarding it. What, then, we have now to do is to seek for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as to its attributes. Already we have learnt to expect to find the truth in apparent contradictions. That which we find, in the course of our inquiry, to be true in one direction, we may find not to be true in another direction. One truth, in order to be absolutely true, will need to be supplemented by some other truth. And keeping this in mind as we require to do, we shall go on to examine the various attributes of the Word of God.

The Perfection and the Imperfection of the Bible.

As the Word of God the Bible is a perfect Book. Its perfection is its most comprehensive attribute. That it is perfect may be asserted with absolute certainty. It must be perfect because it is the Word of God who is Himself perfect in all His attributes. Its perfection springs from His perfect attributes as the self-revealing God. He would not and could not give an imperfect revelation. But when it is

said that the Bible, as God's Word, is perfect, it is meant that the perfection belongs to the revelation it contains. It is this revelation that gives to it all the value it possesses. In revealing Himself to man, all that God was bound by His own perfections to do, was to give a perfect revelation.

In this sense, then, we most emphatically claim perfection for the Bible. The revelation it contains is without fault and without defect. In saying this we have regard to the revelation in its final form. Viewed as a whole, and all its various parts and stages viewed in relation to the ultimate result, it is a perfect revelation. The Bible represents the way in which God revealed Himself, and the principles in accordance with which the revelation was given; and who has ever been able to prove that there was imperfection of any kind in the method He pursued? Again, the perfection of the Bible appears in this, that the God who is revealed in it is seen, when understood, to be the all-perfect One. It contains a perfect revelation of His attributes, of His will, of His purposes, of His relation to nature and to man. By means of it the glory of God may be seen shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Bible revelation is perfect

in relation to its own purpose. It sets before man the way of the perfect life. It sheds perfect light upon his sins, upon his lost condition, and upon all his dangers and needs. It is perfect as a guide to the way of salvation, and to the way in which men may become like their Father in heaven. There is in it no mistake, no error, no discrepancy, no contradiction. From every form of imperfection it is absolutely free. As God is perfect and His way is perfect, so also His Word as a revelation is perfect.

But while the Bible is thus perfect as regards the revelation it contains, it is not perfect in every other respect. There are various imperfections in it as the record of the revelation.

In one all-important respect, indeed, it is perfect even as the record of the revelation. It is perfect in relation to its function; perfect in the sense that by means of it a perfect knowledge of the perfect revelation may be attained. And as the record of the revelation, it had absolutely no need for perfection in any other form. If God has given to us such a record of His revelation as is perfectly fitted to guide us to a perfect knowledge of Himself and to a life of perfect and eternal fellowship with Him, then it is obvious that any other form of perfection in

the record must be wholly unnecessary. Nor does the Bible claim any other form of perfection for itself as the record of the revelation. And for both reasons it is wrong to set up in its behalf claims for other forms of perfection, which are manifestly fictitious.

But while thus perfect in relation to its function as the record of the revelation, the Bible is not perfect absolutely. Absolute perfection was not required by it. The perfection of the revelation it contains and its own perfect fitness to lead to a knowledge of the revelation, are quite independent of much in it as a human product, in connection with which imperfection might exist, and in point of fact does exist. And here we emphasise the human element in the record, because we wish to emphasise the fact that it is exclusively on that side of the Bible, which was of human origin, that any form of real imperfection could find a place. As the perfection of the Bible in all its forms sprang from Divine perfection, so its imperfection in all its forms sprang from human imperfection. The human authors of the Bible were rendered perfect enough to produce a record sufficiently perfect to fulfil all the ends of the revelation. But they were not rendered perfect as regards matters in

connection with which perfection was unnecessary. The functional perfection of the record, for instance, did not require perfect grammar in every sentence and clause from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Nor did it require in every instance an exact statement of dates. Nor did it require perfect verbal accuracy in its accounts, say, of the number of disciples present at a certain meeting. Nor did it require that different Evangelists should use exactly the same words in reporting sayings and doings of the Lord. Nor did it require that in historical narratives, like the Gospels, all the events recorded should be arranged precisely in the order of their actual occurrence. In short, the functional perfection of the record did not require the entire absence from its pages of all manner of discrepancies or inaccuracies. Its functional perfection is wholly compatible with discrepancies or inaccuracies in matters of small importance, in matters of trifling detail, in matters having purely an incidental connection with what is vital in the Bible, in matters without any embodiment of the mind and will of God. From imperfection in such matters, it was not necessary for God to keep the Bible altogether free. If it had been necessary for Him to do this,

He would not have left it undone. It was necessary for Him to provide a perfect revelation, and to provide a record of the revelation perfect enough to preserve the latter, and to make men acquainted with it in its entireness and faultlessness. But since no real evil, but only good, could arise from the presence in the record of imperfections of such an unimportant kind as have been indicated, He permitted them in some instances to arise in it. But notwithstanding their presence in it, the Bible is entirely perfect in its essential character as the Word of God, and in its adaptation to the ends for which He has given it to us.

It follows, therefore, that no one requires to ignore or to deny any such imperfections as exist in the Bible-record, in order to defend or exalt the perfection of the Divine Word. Not one of these imperfections mars, not one of them touches injuriously, either the perfection of the revelation or the perfect fitness of its record to fulfil its office. The true way to defend, or to exalt, the perfection of God's written Word, is to acknowledge and insist upon the great truth that the entire value of the Bible lies solely in the revelation it contains, and in its perfect suitability to guide men to a full and sufficient

knowledge of this revelation. But that is not all that requires to be done in the interests of the truth, and of the Bible itself as the record of the truth of God. The existence of whatever imperfections appear on the human side of the record must also be acknowledged. And it must be shown that all that is essential, vital, and really important in the Scriptures remains wholly unaffected by them. It is not heresy to admit the existence of traces of human imperfection in the Word of God as written by men. It is not heresy to say that there are some discrepancies and inaccuracies in it on its human side. But it is a great truth that the Bible is the perfect Word of God, notwithstanding these blemishes. And it is a great service to the Bible, especially in these days, to proclaim this truth as a gospel.

The Sufficiency and the Insufficiency of the Bible.

The sufficiency of the Bible is one of the features of its perfection. Had it not been sufficient it would not have been perfect. Its sufficiency may be asserted without the least hesitation. To ascribe this attribute to it is to say what is perfectly consistent with the claims it sets up for itself as the Word of God. It is

entirely sufficient in regard to all its professed designs, and in regard to all its professed capabilities; those capabilities that are concerned in and necessary for the fulfilment of its designs. The Bible is sufficient as the record of the Divine revelation. And the revelation it contains is a sufficient revelation of God. There was sufficiency in the way in which the Bible tells us this revelation was communicated. By the revelation all man's needs for such a communication from God are sufficiently provided for. The essential purposes of the revelation are all practical and spiritual, and it is amply furnished with all the spiritual light and force necessary for their full realisation.

By means of the Bible man may attain to a sufficient knowledge of this revelation. He may learn from it all he requires to know of God, of himself, of his vocation in the world. By means of it, and if taught by the Spirit of Truth, the Divine revelation becomes illumination, the light of life in his heart. In this way he may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; and continue growing until his attainments become sufficient to fulfil all the requirements of God's will, and all God's purposes as to his existence, life, and destiny. The Bible sheds full and clear

light upon the way of salvation for men as sinners. It sheds full and clear light upon the way that leads to all manner of spiritual attainment. It sheds full and clear light upon all that God requires every man to be in his disposition, and in the aims and the moral principles of his life; and upon all that He requires every man to do for the furtherance of the kingdom of heaven in the world.

The sufficiency of the Bible has often been considerably abridged by orthodox theologians. From some of them, as well as from reputed heretics, the largeness and the richness of this attribute of the Scriptures have received too scanty recognition. The Bible revelation has regard not to salvation only, in the sense of deliverance from the curse of sin. It has regard also to spiritual religion and to spiritual morality. It has regard to the salvation of the individual sinner; but it has regard also to the salvation of society. It has regard to the visible church; but it has regard likewise to the kingdom of God, as a thing related to the entire life of man. It is meant to prepare men for heaven hereafter; but it is as certainly intended to make men heavenly here and now.

But much of all this, and much more to the

same effect, has been less or more ignored by much that has gone under the name of orthodox theology. Much of it, at any rate, has not received that distinct and sufficient prominence given to it in the Bible. It is true, as a too narrow orthodoxy has often put it, that "the Scriptures contain all things necessary to be known in order to salvation." But it is also true that the Scriptures contain a great deal more, which is also necessary to be known in order that all the spiritual purposes of the Divine revelation may be fulfilled. The Bible contemplates all man's spiritual needs, and all his various relations to God, to his neighbour, to society, and to other objects, with a comprehensiveness and explicitness which no existing theological creed adequately reproduces in its dogmas. The entire body of spiritual truth, in all its essential aspects and principles, is contained in the Bible revelation. Here every truth is revealed with sufficient fulness and perspicuity. Here the greatest prominence is ever given to the truths of most fundamental importance. Here no truth is ignored or suppressed in order that another may be rendered conspicuous or exalted. Here the sufficiency of the revelation is displayed in its bold and distinct outlines ; in the wondrous rich-

ness of its details; in its grand proportions; in its perfect adaptations to man's understanding, heart, conscience, and will; and in its perfect appropriateness to all the individual, social, and cosmopolitan needs of humanity.

Yet to say that the Bible is sufficient is to express only part of the truth. In order to express the whole truth, insufficiency, also, must be affirmed of it. But between its sufficiency and its insufficiency there is no real incompatibility. The various phases of its insufficiency all belong to a side of it, or to aspects of it, beyond the province where its sufficiency lies. From every form of radical deficiency it is entirely free; as appears as soon as the various forms of its insufficiency are observed and understood.

It is probable that the Bible does not contain all the books written by inspired men. It is certain "that Christ and His Apostles delivered many discourses which were not recorded, and which could they now be known and authenticated, would be of equal authority with the books now regarded as canonical."[1] In another connection, we have seen that many things done by Christ, which must have contained revelation, were not recorded, so that the knowledge of them

[1] C. Hodge.

has not been preserved for future ages. The same thing must have happened as regards some of God's doings during the course of His self-manifestation in Old Testament times. Moreover, it may be pointed out, as was done before, that there was more implied in the actual history of the Divine revelation than the Bible as a record was capable of entirely reproducing; and that the actual history was incapable of embodying absolutely the infinitude of the self-revealing God.

The Bible itself does not profess to give a revelation of God absolutely sufficient. There are various profound questions regarding God and nature and man and future destiny, which the thoughtful mind would like to have answered, and with respect to which the Bible revelation is silent. The Almighty may be known by us, and yet we cannot find Him out to perfection. (Job xi. 7.) We know that righteousness and judgment are the habitations of His throne, and yet clouds and darkness are round about Him. (Ps. xcvii. 2.) The mysteries that surrounded God in Old Testament times were not all dispelled by the appearance of His Son in the flesh, and by the light of the Divine glory which was seen shining in His face. The very

excess of this light seemed to create an excess of darkness. Hence Paul exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. xi. 33). And the same Apostle made the confession, "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

While, however, insufficiency may be predicated of the Bible in respects such as these, the relative sufficiency both of the revelation and of the record remain unaffected thereby. The revelation is sufficient as regards all necessary purposes and all actual requirements. The very mysteries that it leaves undispelled are one aspect of its sufficiency. They quicken spiritual thought; they intensify spiritual longing; they impart inspiration to faith and to hope. They are not the mysteries of darkness, but the mysteries of light; and their function is to allure man upwards to the higher life of heaven, and onwards to the fuller light of eternity. Christ, the Personal Word, is the Light of the world, to follow whom is not to walk in darkness, but to have the light of life. And the written Word

is an all-sufficient guide to lead to Him. It is able to make wise unto salvation through faith in Him. It contains all things necessary to be known for salvation, and for a perfectly religious and a perfectly moral life.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE AND ITS LIMITATIONS.

THE perfection and the sufficiency of Scripture have both been secured by inspiration. They are results from plenary inspiration. It is proper to call the Bible the Word of God, because the men who wrote it, as the record of a perfect and sufficient Divine revelation, were Divinely inspired for their sacred task. The subject of inspiration is so large that it cannot be fully treated here. Nor is a full treatment of the subject called for. What we are mainly concerned about doing is to show that inspiration, in relation to the Bible, is both plenary and partial, and to reconcile the two aspects as containing the whole truth on this part of our subject. We need not pause here to prove that the Bible is an inspired book. The New Testament testifies to the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Tim. iii. 15-17); and the New Testament Scriptures are accepted by us as being the products of the same supernatural influence.

It is the custom with capable writers on this subject to distinguish carefully between inspiration and revelation. But as this distinction has already been explained in the chapter on Revelation and its Object, it does not call here for further notice.

Inspiration is an attribute of the Bible respecting which the Scriptures themselves say very little. The Word of God, for the most part, leaves its inspiration to bear testimony to itself, in the essential truths of the Divine revelation, and in their power over the hearts of those persons who are of the truth.

The New Testament makes a distinction between the inspiration of the sacred writers and the inspiration of the sacred writings. The inspiration of the writers is alluded to in the words of Peter, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 4); and the inspiration of the writings, in the words of Paul, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii. 16).

The Inspiration of the Writers.

Let us, in the first place, give attention to the inspiration of the writers. Their inspiration implied a certain relation of the Spirit of God

to them. They were moved by the Holy Ghost. Regarding some aspects of this relation we may have the feeling of certainty. We know that the inspired writer was the personal organ of the Divine Spirit. The Spirit did not act upon him from without, but through him from within. To use a well-known figure, the writer was not the Spirit's pen, but the Spirit's penman. He was not a mere passive instrument wielded by the Spirit mechanically, but an active personal agent possessed by the Spirit's light and controlled by the Spirit's power. We know, moreover, certain effects which inspiration must have had upon the writer's mind. The effect of inspiration in him was the possession of a message of truth from God. But when Divine truth is possessed by the mind, even in ordinary instances, and when the truth possesses the mind, as it always did in the condition of inspiration, the result is mental quickening and enlargement, and the spirit of wisdom and judgment. Truth from God, filling the mind and controlling it, does not suppress personality. It does not introduce stagnation into any of the activities that are essential to the mind. It imparts fuller life to all the faculties, and to all the susceptibilities touched by the Divine influence at work. The

writer is at his best when he is most inspired; and when he is most inspired, all his natural gifts, peculiarities, attainments, mental acquisitions, that possess affinity for the inspiration, are drawn into its service. Inspiration works in the man and through him; and thus it uses him, and always uses him, with a largeness proportionate to its own plenitude.

But all that has been now said, and said as matter of certainty, refers rather to some of the characteristics and effects of inspiration than to its essential nature. No abstract definition of the innermost nature of inspiration has ever been given. Nor is such a definition possible. It is a matter of actual mental and spiritual experience; and, therefore, before any one could define it, he would require himself, for one thing, to have been at least once consciously inspired. But even an inspired person could not analyse, in abstract terms, the internal relation between the Divine Spirit and his own. This relation would remain a mystery to him; and that for the reason, that it would exist below the sphere of his consciousness. It is below the sphere of consciousness that the Spirit of Truth unites with the mind in ordinary cases, where spiritual illumination is the result; and there, too, the

union between the Divine and the human spirit must have been effected in every instance where inspiration was the result.

The act of inspiration, on the part of the Spirit of Truth, is falsely represented when it is spoken of, as it too often is, as an act of dictation. In the act of inspiration the Divine Spirit reveals; in the state of inspiration the inspired person sees. On the side of the Divine Spirit there is revelation; on the side of the inspired person there is an apprehension of the revelation,—spiritual vision, insight into the meaning of the realities unfolded to the mind, discernment as to their value, wisdom as to their bearings, practical adaptations, and designs. This was Christ's theory of inspiration. The Spirit of Truth, whom He promised to send to the Apostles, was not to speak words to them, but He was to show them things. The revelation was to be given, not to the ear in sounds, but to the eye in visions; the eye of the soul, opened to apprehend the things of Christ, the things of God, spiritual realities (John xvi. 14, 15). And this, too, was the theory of Paul, in whom the Spirit of revelation and of inspiration dwelt so plentifully, "God," he said, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in

our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

In regard to the nature of inspiration, it would seem to be in the direction of truth to say that the state of the inspired mind, in some respects, resembles that of any mind which is of the truth, and which is being taught by the Spirit of Truth. This is suggested by such facts as the following:—(1.) The same Spirit of Truth, who inspired the writers of the Bible, teaches all who come to know the truth as it is in Jesus. (2.) The revelations received, say, by Paul, are the same truths that those apprehend, who enter into the meaning of his teaching, and in whom the truths are fruitful in Christian life and service. (3.) In order to understand his writings, moreover, we must read them in the spirit in which they were written. Yet the state of inspiration and the state of ordinary spiritual illumination are not in every respect the same. In the case of the former, something exceptional and extraordinary must be implied. This appears, for instance, in the inspiration of Paul. Spiritual illumination in its common form does not seem able to account for the revelations received and committed to writing by him. He is the leading

New Testament expounder of Christianity. He had no acquaintance with Christ during the lifetime of the latter, as we have already had occasion to remark. He did not receive his knowledge of what Christianity is from any of the other Apostles who had been disciples of Christ. His knowledge of Christianity, in all its comprehensive and particular aspects, was perfectly original. With the help of the Old Testament Scriptures he derived it all from his own study, mainly, of the few leading facts in Christ's history —His incarnation, His death, His resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of God, and His intercession there. His only teacher was the Spirit of Truth. And it seems incredible that he should have been able, at first hand and without receiving the help of teaching from man, to discover and interpret the import of these facts, as he did, unless the Spirit of Truth had influenced him, fired him, and enlightened him in some exceptional and unusual manner,—in that superlative degree, at least, of Divine impulse, insight, and guidance, which made his teaching the very Word of God. His teaching and his writings cannot be explained merely by the supposition that he was a man of intense religious zeal, and endowed in a high degree with a rare combina-

tion of intellectual powers. And while it may not seem at all astonishing that any person should be able, by means of the ordinary teaching of the Divine Spirit, to learn truly and adequately the import of the facts of Christ's history as apprehended and explained by Paul, this does not account for what the Spirit of Truth did in him and through him. The astonishing thing in his case is, that he received the revelations at first hand, and made an original communication of them in speech and writing. It is one thing for any person to be taught by Paul to see and apprehend the revelations he received; it was a totally different thing for him to see and apprehend those revelations, with no document to help him but the Old Testament Scriptures, with nothing to study but the facts of Christ's history, and with no other teacher but the Spirit of God.

The inspiration of Paul must have borne in it some element of the supernatural. But even here no absolute distinction can be made between it and ordinary spiritual illumination. For it is an evangelical truth that the supernatural comes into play also, though in a manner not so plenary, in every instance where the Spirit of

Truth imparts to the mind that knowledge of God in Christ which is eternal life.

In the case of Paul, moreover, and in that of all other inspired writers, inspiration had a vital relation to character. Unholy men never could have received from God the essential revelations of the Bible; nor, in the capacity of authors, could they have been the first to commit those revelations to writing. To represent inspiration as occurring and taking effect, independently of personal holiness in the writer, shows a lamentable misconception of the nature of the essential truths of the Divine revelation, and of certain subjective conditions, which require to be fulfilled before those truths can possibly be apprehended. The voice of Divine revelation, which is, in other words, the voice of Christ, is heard only by those who are of the truth. To apprehend the essential truths of Divine revelation, is to see God; and those who see God are the pure in heart (Matt. v. 8). God is love, and the highest vision of God is the apprehension of His love as revealed in Christ. But "he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (1 John iv. 8).

Inspiration both presupposes personal holiness and tends to deepen it. The men of the Bible, most distinguished as the recipients of the essen-

tial truths of Divine revelation, were the men most distinguished for spirituality of mind, for elevation of character, for a life of fellowship with God, for personal consecration to noble service. This is the Bible's own view of the matter. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (1 Peter i. 21). It is contrary to the Bible to teach that inspiration in itself has no sanctifying influence, and that unsanctified men, such as Caiaphas, may be inspired;[1] unless by inspiration something is meant very different from that supernatural influence and teaching of the Spirit of Truth, who is also the Spirit of Holiness, by which real Divine revelations were made to men like Moses and Paul. Far more in harmony with the teaching and the entire character of the Bible are the words: "It was those who were most in sympathy with the purposes of God, and who were most imbued with His own spirit, who were best prepared to see and recount His revelations. The man who gave himself up to God, who was emptied of self-seeking, and of worldly ways of looking at things, was best fitted to understand what God sought to disclose to men. Such a man became the purest possible channel of the

[1] This is the view of C. Hodge.

Spirit. What he sees, he sees clearly, and truly, having no interest to see anything different from what God actually makes known. And what he sees he utters authoritatively, knowing that it is not his own will he is declaring, but the will of God." [1]

Another question about the inspiration of the sacred writers may be raised. Was inspiration in all the various writers of the Old Testament and of the New, uniform in point of quality and of degree? Was inspiration the same alike in the Historian, in the Legislator, in the Psalmist, in the Moral Philosopher, in the Prophet, in the Editor, in the Evangelist, in the Apostolic Teacher, in the Apocalypt? To this question the Bible itself gives no explicit answer. But it may be inferred that, while there was in inspiration some fundamental element common to all inspired writers, this was accompanied with certain modifications peculiar to each of them, and determined by the special task which each was called to perform. For one task performed by one inspired writer differed from that of another in various ways. It was one thing, for instance, to record an occurrence or a series of occurrences; another thing to frame and record

[1] "Revelation and Inspiration." Marcus Dods, D.D.

a body of moral, political, and ceremonial laws and precepts; another thing, still, to expound, as Paul did, the meaning of the history of Christ's self-manifestation as the Son of God; and another thing, again, to predict, as John did, in the Apocalypse, the moral course of Christianity in its conflict with evil, and in its achievements throughout near and distant ages. The Divine Spirit, therefore, as the Spirit of Inspiration, must have adapted His influence, in its action upon and through the sacred writers, to the special requirements of the work which each of them produced. All the gifts of God are bestowed upon the recipients of them for some special purpose. And in this respect inspiration, which is a Divine gift, resembles every other gift of God. It was a manifold gift, both as regards its influence and as regards its results. It was a gift in the form of moral enthusiasm; a gift in the form of special mental prepossession and direction; a gift of discernment and discrimination as to the value of materials respecting which a writer had to exercise his judgment and make his choice; a gift which was related to the writer in the form of superintendence; a gift of mental and spiritual elevation; a gift of extraordinary insight into the reality and significance

of the things of revelation; a gift of reproducing, in writing, with relative adequacy, the revelations apprehended. It was all of these. And it was all of them, or only some of them, or one of them more than another, in every inspired writer, according to the nature of his particular task, and according to his special need for Divine help in the performance of it.

The special task of the writers, moreover, must have determined the extent of their inspiration. In so far as this task depended upon inspiration, the latter must have been plenary, sufficient, perfect. As the human authors of the the Word of God, the sacred writers must have been taken possession of by the Divine Spirit fully, up to the extent of their need of such help. But as the Divine inspiration was imparted to them with exclusive reference to their task, it is to be assumed and borne in mind that the inspiration would be limited to the special requirements of the task. They received inspiration to enable them to do all that which they could not have accomplished without it. But, on the other hand, they did not receive it to help them to do that which they could accomplish by other and ordinary means.

The Inspiration of the Writings.

The inspiration of the Sacred Writings falls now to be considered. Inspiration had two functions to perform. It had to receive Divine revelation, and it had to record Divine revelation. The Bible is an inspired Book. It is inspired in the sense that it is the product of inspired men. The truth contained in the Bible is from the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth, who moved, taught, and guided the writers. The Bible is in this sense "God-inspirited;" it is full of the Divine Spirit, and, as it were, vivified by it. This is what Paul seems to teach in 2 Tim. iii. 16—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," &c. His words have been variously rendered. But at most they can only mean that the Bible is a God-inspirited Book; a Book in which are embodied all those results which the Divine inspiration was intended and fitted to produce. And although Paul's words were written with only the Scriptures of the Old Testament in view, we may accept them as applying in the fullest sense also to the books of the New Testament Canon.

The Bible is a collection of Writings or Scriptures. The latter word, both in its singular and

plural form, is a common designation of the Word of God. The Bible frequently applies the name to its own contents. The word "Scripture" often denotes the whole Bible. Sometimes it denotes only one of the books of the Bible. And in the New Testament it frequently occurs, where it refers only to a very small portion, a few words, of the Bible. This very restricted use of the word was occasionally made by our Lord. Let us take the instance in John x. 34, 35. Here we find Him applying the designation to the very few words, "I said ye are gods." These few words were scripture; they were the scripture to which He alluded in His observations at the time. Thus we see that there is a certain degree of ambiguity connected with the use of the word "Scripture" as a name for the contents of the Bible. And this requires to be kept in view, in order that we may be on our guard, when necessity arises, to distinguish between things that differ. Failure to make such distinction has sometimes led to misunderstanding as to what our Lord said about the small scripture now before us. Alluding to it, He said, "The scripture cannot be broken." But this statement had reference only to the scripture in question. What He said about it does not

imply that He held the same to be true regarding every other scripture contained in the Old Testament. Yet many have drawn from His words the conclusion that He had the whole of the Old Testament in view. But to draw this conclusion is to put our Lord in a false relation to His Bible, and to make Him contradict Himself. For He did not hold that none of the scriptures in the Old Testament could be broken. On the contrary, there were scriptures in it which He both broke Himself and taught others to break (*e.g.*, Ex. xxi. 24, 25; Matt. v. 28, and Deut. xxiv. 1-3; Matt. xix. 3-9).

The Inspiration of the Writings Plenary.

Now, however, we must turn to the question, Was the Bible wholly inspired? Is plenary inspiration one of its attributes? It is certain that its inspiration must be plenary with respect to every thing for which inspiration was necessary. The fact that the Bible is inspired at all proves that necessity for inspiration must have existed. God never acts in such a supernatural manner as is presupposed by inspiration, to effect results which might happen in the ordinary course of nature. In seeking to carry out His

will and purposes in results, whether in the natural or in the spiritual world, He always works by means of ordinary forces and in accordance with ordinary laws, unless when some special necessity leads Him to adopt some extraordinary course of procedure. Application of this fact, then, may be made to the inspiration of the Bible, in two ways. On the one hand, it is to be concluded that its inspiration was occasioned by a special necessity in connection with the Divine revelation ; and on the other, it is to be inferred that it must have been inspired only in the sense and only to the extent that necessity called for.

Thus, then, we learn, apart from any consideration of the phenomena presented by the Bible, that we should expect to find its inspiration co-extensive with the necessity that existed for this mode of supernatural interposition in the production of the Scriptures. Inspiration as a special and extraordinary form of Divine activity, would not come into play to produce that which might have resulted from the action of ordinary causes. And to say so, is not to give utterance to a mere speculation; but to affirm a great truth, which is confirmed by all that we know of God's ways and of His revealed mind and will.

The extent of inspiration was determined by a special necessity.

In order, therefore, to ascertain the extent of the inspiration of the Bible, we require to settle, in the first place, what was the special necessity that determined it. This special necessity has a prominent and fundamental place assigned to it among the doctrines of pure orthodoxy concerning the Word of God. The Bible as the Word of God written by men is, according to genuinely orthodox theory, the record of a special Divine revelation. This special revelation is not identical, in all its contents, with the Divine revelation that shines in creation, in providence, and in the human conscience. It, indeed, embraces all the truths revealed there, and vivifies and emphasises them. But it is a revelation of other truths, which man, apart from special acts of Divine self-manifestation, never could have discovered in these directions. It was in connection with the special acts of Divine self-manifestation, then, that the special need for inspiration arose. Inspiration has done much to shed light upon the truths of Natural Religion, as they are wont to be called. It has fully recognised their value and established their claims to be accepted as veritable revelations of God. But inspiration

has done far more than that. It has watched, studied, and understood the ways of the self-revealing God, as He approached men and moved among them, throughout the course of what was a specially supernatural history; and it has recorded what it saw and understood in the Sacred Scriptures. In the specially supernatural acts and movements of God among men from time to time, it discerned and fully apprehended a special Divine revelation; and it recorded this special Divine revelation in the Bible. This was the task that inspiration was called into existence for; and the inspiration of the Bible is plenary up to the full measure of the special requirements of the task.

To say that the Bible is an inspired Book is the same as to say that it is the Word of God; or to say that God Himself speaks in it as a special revelation of His mind, will, and redeeming purpose. And in various ways the presence of God in it is absolutely plenary. Every one of those supernatural occurrences, recorded in the Bible, and in connection with which God revealed Himself, was full of His special presence. Every one of those facts was replete with some form or other of special Divine self-manifestation. And the Bible as a record of the facts and of their

significance and their bearings upon men, upon the world, and upon human destiny, is practically a plenary account and interpretation of all the facts with which it was the special function of inspiration to deal.

But the plenary inspiration of the Bible, as the record of a special Divine revelation, may be looked at and confirmed from another point of view. And here let us follow the Westminster Confession of Faith. What is the special revelation which, according to this document, "is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture"? It is a special revelation of "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life." The passage contains a carefully expressed, and what was believed by the authors of it to be a full, definition of the Bible revelation. It shows what they believed God had been necessitated to reveal in a special way, and what in their view was the extent to which inspiration was required by God in recording the Divine revelation. Inspiration had provided in the Bible a record of the whole counsel of God concerning all things—not all things purely incidental as well as necessary—but all

things necessary for His own glory, for man's salvation, faith, and life. Inspiration was required to do all this. And it did it all. In this respect it was plenary. In this respect the Bible is the inspired Word of God. In all that it has to say on the matters embraced in the foregoing definition of its contents, it asserts its Divine origin; it proves itself to be full of the spirit of truth; it exhales the inspiration to which it owes its existence, its life, its power. And the plenitude of its inspiration is inexhaustible, incapable even of undergoing diminution. It is as God-inspirited to-day as it was when it proceeded fresh from the sacred writers.

In one respect plenary inspiration may be affirmed of the record as well as of the revelation. The record is bound up with the revelation. The latter has an indispensable need of the former. Without the record the purposes of the revelation never could have been fulfilled. The record, moreover, meets all the requirements of the revelation. It is perfectly adapted to the ends for which it has been Divinely provided. It is all-sufficient for the discharge of its Divinely-appointed offices. And it is all this as a result of inspiration.

In such wise, then, the inspiration of the Bible

is plenary. Without inspiration the results indicated could not have been secured. And if it has secured them, it has secured all that was indeed necessary. For if inspiration has secured for us the perfect and the practically adequate revelation contained in the Bible, and if it has provided the Bible for us in a form perfectly adapted to the ends of the revelation and to man's needs, what else was there for inspiration as a specially supernatural endowment to do? It would be unreasonable and disrespectful to the wisdom and the ways of God, if we imagined He had done for men, by means of inspiration, anything whatsoever that was not demanded by some necessity or other.

The Inspiration of the Writings Partial.

It is not surprising therefore—to pass on to the next matter for consideration—that there should be found certain by-paths in the Bible where inspiration did not enter, and from which it is absent, because its presence was either impossible or unnecessary. What we mean, in other words, is this: While in the ways already indicated the inspiration of the Bible is plenary, complete, pervasive; yet common sense, honesty,

and respect for the wisdom and the ways of God, compel the admission that its inspiration does not extend to absolutely all its minor features and phenomena. Its inspiration is plenary, and yet at the same time and nevertheless it is partial. Nor is it any more unreasonable to make this affirmation, than it is to hold that man has in his nature a plenary endowment of immortality; and yet in view of his entire nature to hold that his immortality is partial, since his body is mortal. And the affirmation of both the plenary and the partial inspiration of the Bible is as reasonable and as respectful to it as it is reasonable and respectful to the Person of Christ, to teach that His Divinity is as plenary as the Godhead of the Father; and yet to teach that, in relation to His entire Person in all its attributes and phenomena, it is partial because He is man as well as God.

The inspiration of the Bible extends to both its Divine and its human side. Its inspiration came from God, and men wrote it as inspired. But its inspiration does not extend to the whole of the human element in it—to every one of the directions, where this element may be traced. Everything in the Bible comes directly, or indirectly, into relation with inspiration; but it

is not to be deduced from this, that everything in it must be inspired. To draw this conclusion would be as absurd as it would be to infer, that everything in man's nature must be mental, because it has direct or indirect relation to his mind; or to contend that everything in Christ's Person must be Divine, because it has direct or indirect relation to His Godhead. The truth is, that the Bible is a Book of diverse qualities and phenomena, because it is both a Divine and a human product; and partial as well as plenary inspiration is what we should expect to find in it. Inevitably there is in it much that is human. Inevitably the human element is present in it with great manifoldness and variety. Inevitably there are in it many things, and a great variety of things, that are purely incidental to the history, the character, and the designs of the Divine revelation. And to hold that the flood of inspiration streams through all the channels of such phenomena, would be contrary alike to the facts of the Bible, to the dictates of reason, and to the ways of God. If, however, it is true that in the Bible there are side regions into which inspiration does not go, it is also true that it is never absent where its presence can be shown to be necessary, or its

absence proved to be hurtful to the character or to the ends of the revelation.

One thing very apparent in the Bible is, that the human element is not only deeply and extensively impressed upon it, but this element, in a remarkable degree, bears in many instances marks of the individual characteristics and proclivities of the sacred writers. This Bible phenomenon is well described as follows :—" The sacred writers were not machines. Their self-consciousness was not suspended. Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It was men, not machines; not unconscious instruments, but living, thinking, willing minds, whom the Spirit used as His organs. Moreover, as inspiration did not involve the suspension or suppression of the human faculties, so neither did it interfere with the free exercise of the distinctive moral characteristics of the individual. If a Hebrew was inspired, he spake Hebrew; if a Greek, he spake Greek; if an educated man, he spake as a man of culture; if uneducated, he spake as such a man is wont to speak. If his mind was logical, he reasoned as Paul did; if emotional and contemplative, he wrote as John wrote. All this is involved in the fact that God uses His instruments in accordance with

their nature. The sacred writers impressed their peculiarities on their several productions as plainly as though they were the subjects of no extraordinary influence. This is one of the phenomena of the Bible patent to the most cursory reader. It lies in the very nature of inspiration that God spake in the language of men; that He uses men as His organs, each according to his peculiar gifts and endowments."[1]

Now, in regard to this phenomenon, one thing is obvious, viz.: that the Divine Author of the Bible respected the men who wrote it—respected all that in them which was human, natural, and ordinary; respected and used for the ends of His revelation, even that in each of them which happened to be peculiar to himself, as regards his mental powers, his natural disposition, his education, his experience, his intellectual and spiritual acquisitions and attainments. In all these respects much belonged to the writers of the Bible, which they did not possess at all as the result of inspiration. The possession was theirs before they sat down with pen in hand; theirs as the effect of ordinary causes, and as the result of

[1] "System. Theo.," vol. i. 157. C. Hodge, D.D.

God's ordinary providential and gracious dealings with them. And this result God saw fit to introduce into and stamp upon the character of His written Word.

In accordance with this fact, there is in the Bible, incidentally and as a matter of course, a great deal of information and knowledge for which no inspiration was required. Inspiration was required with respect to all the facts in which from time to time the Divine revelation was given. It was required in order that the value, the significance, and the practical bearings and application of the facts might be duly apprehended. And it was required in order that a practically perfect and sufficient record of the revelation might be made. But there are many incidental statements in the Bible, especially in the historical books, which contain matters of information and knowledge on subjects of ordinary observation, experience, and reflection, for which special inspiration was no more needed by the writers of the Bible, than it is required by the authors of ordinary books. The amount and the variety of matter contained in the Bible, which does not of itself suggest any special necessity for inspiration, is very great; although it happens to be worked up with

matter of another nature, for which inspiration was required. The Scriptures, in other words, are very rich in information about and allusions to nations, cities, men, and all kinds of human affairs and interests, such as find a place in uninspired books; only as finding a place in the Bible, such information and allusions have this peculiarity, that they are there brought into circumstantial and incidental connection with the great facts and truths of the Divine revelation.

The four Gospels, for instance, are full of facts and allusions, for the knowledge of which, ordinary observation, intelligent attention, and trustworthy report alone, were necessary. The Evangelists did not require inspiration in order to know such things as the name of Christ, the names of His mother and of the other members of His family, and the names of His twelve Apostles. They did not require inspiration in order to know how old Christ was when He was baptised; or what were His movements during His public life; or that He preached sometimes in the synagogue, sometimes by the sea-shore, and sometimes in the Temple; or that He worked various kinds of miracles of healing; or even that He was crucified. These and very many other things in the Gospel narratives, men be-

came aware of in the ordinary way, as eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of that which came to pass. But while this was so, the narratives which are so full of such materials, were inspired. Inspiration impelled the writers to do their utmost to possess full information. It filled them with a deep sense of the value of all the things they knew concerning Christ and His life and work. It gave them discrimination to select their materials, and wisdom to combine them in their respective Gospels. And in these, as well as in other ways, it enabled them, in their several accounts, so to reproduce the image of Christ and the character of His life and mission, that, when we read their testimony we are compelled to say, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

In the same way, even the Epistles of Paul contain a good deal of matter—as becomes apparent when they are analysed—the knowledge of which did not arise from inspiration. It was not to inspiration, for example, that he owed his knowledge of the serious divisions which sprang up in the Church of Corinth: although, on the other hand, inspiration enabled him to understand the significance of the divisions and gave him wisdom to write concerning them according to the mind of Christ.

It is, moreover, another characteristic of the Bible, that it contains a considerable amount of matter, in the form of extremely circumstantial and incidental details, in which, when looked at by themselves, no revelation seems to be conveyed. There is, to take only a very few instances, no revelation in the information that the Hebrews put straw into the composition of the bricks they made in the Land of Egypt (Ex. v. 10-19). Nor is there any revelation in the account of the height of Goliath and of the details of his armour (1 Sam. xvii. 4-7). Nor is there any revelation in Paul's request to Timothy, "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments" (2 Tim. iv. 13).

To refer such matters as these to inspiration, then, seems to be altogether out of serious question. It was not necessary that every thing contained in an inspired book should have inspiration in it; and this view has the authority of Paul, as appears from 1 Cor. vii. 6-25. But it does not follow that inspiration had nothing to do with the interweaving of such circumstantial and incidental details into the texture of the written Word of God. There is one thing

that inspiration might do in connection with them. Small matters, in themselves insignificant, when introduced into writings, often have the effect of shedding important lights upon matters of immense significance and transcendent value. In this manner they frequently acquire a relative value far surpassing that which otherwise attaches to them. And so with the vast amount of matter in the Bible of the kind now under consideration. Into the character of the Bible it enters largely. It does not in itself contain any revelation. Its presence in the Bible does not, when it is viewed by itself, suggest any need for inspiration. Yet it immensely increases the value of the Scriptures. Relatively the matters of Divine revelation contained in the Scriptures are much dependent upon it. It deepens the interestingness of the Word of God. Much of it is invaluable for purposes of edification. It helps to supply points of view, setting, side lights and reflections, all of which help to render more conspicuous and impressive the great facts of the Divine revelation, and the great truths which these facts were intended to disclose. And if, in regard to the kind of matter now before us, inspiration did nothing more, it may be held as having directed the writers as to the manner of using

up such matter, so as to render it of real, great, and lasting, though only relative, value in the Bible as the record of the revelation.

But, further, if there is in the Bible much matter which, when taken out of connection with other matter of great inherent importance, suggests no need for revelation, there is in it also a considerable proportion of other matter which in itself is of such a nature that the very idea of inspiration is excluded from it. The Bible contains sayings which it refers to Satan. It reports the sayings of foolish, lying, and otherwise wicked men. It records, for instance, the sayings of some of those who reviled our Lord. And to say that the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth and of Holiness was in such sayings, of which there are so many in the Word of God, would be to utter blasphemy. Yet even in connection with such sayings, also, as recorded in the Bible by its human authors, inspiration might come into play and serve necessary purposes. Just as insignificant things often derive great relative value from the light which they reflect upon matters of great inherent value; so things false or things morally wrong often possess great relative value in relation to truth and righteousness, from the vivid and impressive light

in which they help to set them by way of contrast. Immensely more, than otherwise could have happened, do the truth and righteousness of God in Christ shine forth in eternal light, in awful vividness, in tremendous impressiveness, by reason of the very darkness of error and sin, on the part of His enemies, which came into opposition with Him and brought Him to His cross; and which give so much character to the Gospel records. Without the blending of this error and sin with the truth and righteousness of Christ, in the records of His life and death, the light of the records would have been comparatively dim. The shades bring out the lights. The dark record of the crucifixion is at the same time the record of the largest and brightest region in the history of the Divine revelation. Far be it from any person, therefore, to say or to think, that there is inspiration in the record of any error or sin contained in the Bible. Yet it is reasonable to hold that such records found their place in the Bible, as the result of some degree of inspiration, directing the designs and methods of its writers.

Verbal Inspiration.

In closing this chapter, let us briefly examine the question of verbal inspiration. This question, one may venture to say, has often had a degree of importance attached to it far beyond its real value. Perhaps this has arisen from one of the wiles of Satan — the enemy of truth and righteousness. At most, at all events, the question is one of only third-rate importance. The question of primary importance is — Does the Bible contain a perfect and sufficient revelation from God? The one of next importance is— Is the Bible, as the record of this revelation, fit to guide us to an adequate knowledge of the revelation, and thereby to a sufficient knowledge of God and to a life of fellowship with Him? If these two questions can be answered in the affirmative, as we have argued and explained they can, then, practically, it is of little or no importance whether the very words of Scripture were or were not inspired. No better, no more perfect Bible, is needed by us, for all God's purposes in relation to our state, to our life, and to our destiny, than one containing a full revelation of Him and of His ways; and one capable of bringing us to an adequate and practical knowledge of this revelation.

Still it requires to be emphasised that very much depends upon the character of the words in which the Bible revelation was committed to writing. It is certain that the men who wrote it would not be indifferent to the appropriateness of the words in which they embodied the information, the knowledge, or the counsel they had to convey. In proportion as a writer is true in himself, and true to the ends and the claims of truth, will he exercise discrimination and care as to his choice of the words in which he wishes to express his thoughts. Moreover, the choice of words on the part of a writer is not made independently of the influences acting upon his mind while his pen is doing its office. The occurrence of different words to the writer's mind, and his preference for one rather than another, are dependent less or more upon the mental mood he happens to be in when the preference is made. At one time a writer is more figurative in his language owing to his existing frame of mind; and at another, more literal because his frame of mind has changed.

These reflections, then, shed some light on the subject of verbal inspiration. Inspiration must have created a vivid and luminous mood of mind in the writers of the Bible. The influence of

this mood must have told directly or indirectly upon their words, as it told upon their thoughts. And this must have happened, at least, when they had thoughts to communicate embodying actual revelation. This view seems to be verified by Paul. Speaking of the things of Divine revelation he says: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. ii. 13). The words as well as the thoughts are referred to the Spirit's teaching. The words he used were not dictated to him by the Spirit from without, but suggested from within. The thoughts he had received from the Spirit's illumination in some real manner controlled him in the selection of his words.

Here, then, in point of fact, we find him claiming for himself, as an inspired writer, what may be fairly designated verbal inspiration. But it does not follow, as undiscerning and uncritical readers are constantly assuming, that Paul in the passage now quoted lays down the doctrine of universal verbal inspiration. He was not so unwise as to do any thing of the kind. In these words he did not write of verbal inspiration from the standpoint of theory. What

he said had reference to the words he used when dealing with the matters of Divine revelation, such as he was dwelling upon at the time. He was writing about the things of the Divine revelation—the things of God, the things of the Spirit of God, the deep things of God. He was not writing about things that the eye hath seen, or that the ear hath heard, or that have entered into the heart of man; but about those purely spiritual realities which form the essence of the Divine revelation. And what he said about the language he employed was in effect this—he said, that as the Spirit of God revealed to him the things of God, so the same Spirit guided him as to the words in which he expressed his ideas. And so we may take for granted it must have been with Paul on all occasions when he had ideas of Divine realities to express. And so, too, we may assume it would be with every inspired writer of the Bible, when his message was one of pure spiritual revelation; when, that is to say, the message consisted in some form or other of things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man."

But all this, concerning the words of the Bible, is a totally different thing from the

doctrine of universal verbal inspiration. Let us divide the things of the Bible into the two classes of things suggested by Paul in the passage to which we have been alluding. On the one side, there are in the Bible numberless statements about, and allusions to, things which the eye hath seen, and the ear heard, and which have entered into the heart of man. And on the other side, there are in the Bible numberless statements about, and allusions to, spiritual and invisible realities, the Divine and eternal things of the Bible-revelation. What Paul says about verbal inspiration, then, has reference entirely and exclusively to this latter class of things. His utterance as to this form of inspiration has nothing to do whatsoever with the other class of things, or with the words in which such things are expressed in Scripture. Nor is there in the Bible any passage or utterance in which verbal inspiration is claimed with respect to such matters. But, on the other hand, there is abundant evidence in the Bible discrepancies and in other phenomena in the Bible, to the effect that verbal inspiration does not extend beyond that domain in the Bible within which revelations of Divine and eternal truth are given.

But while this is so, the Bible as to the matter

of language is perfectly sufficient for all its purposes. As the Word of God, it is far more concerned about the things revealed than about the mode of expressing them. The things of the Spirit of God are the kernel of the Bible; the form in which they are expressed is the husk. The inspired Word itself says, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6).

CHAPTER X.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE BIBLE AND ITS LIMITATIONS.

THE Bible must be infallible since the men who wrote it were inspired by the Spirit of Truth, and since, as the result of this inspiration, it contains a perfect revelation; a revelation which is all-sufficient in regard to every one of the ends contemplated by the self-revealing God. The term infallibility is not itself a Bible word. But no objection need be raised against it on this account. For the reasons just stated, the Bible cannot but possess the attribute of infallibility. Besides, it claims as one of its qualities the very thing which the term infallibility signifies. This term, as applied to a body of truth, has a manifold signification. Its meaning has reference solely to the truth concerned. It implies that this truth does not contain any element of error. It implies that there can be no error in it. It implies, therefore, that it is worthy of being accepted. And it implies, if the truth is prac-

tical and has reference to human conduct, that it will not mislead those who follow its guidance. Infallible truth neither can err nor lead into error. It is not too much, then, to affirm that, in all these respects, the Word of God is infallible. The Word of God is the Truth of God, who cannot lie. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Ps. xix. 7-9). In these words of the Psalmist the tone of infallibility is perfectly distinct; and this is the tone of the whole Word of God, in its character as a Divine revelation.

Protestantism and the Infallibility of the Bible.

It is a doctrine of Protestant theology that the attribute of infallibility belongs to the Bible alone. The assertion of infallibility, as one of its attributes, was made as a protest against the claim to Papal infallibility, and by way of denying the infallibility of all uninspired writings.

The attitude taken up was, "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament alone are the infallible Word of God. They alone are to be accepted and trusted in as the truth of God, and as an unerring guide. All other writings are fallible; and the Church is fallible." It is this outlook beyond the Bible itself, in the assertion of its infallibility, and this attitude of negation towards other authorities, that appears in the declaration. "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions by men."[1] And the same is still more apparent in the following: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture, we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New

[1] Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. I.

Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." [1]

Thus it is manifest that when these Protestant articles were framed, the position taken up in regard to the infallibility of the Bible was this: "The Bible is infallible, and there is no other infallible authority as to matters of salvation, of faith, and of life." The framers of the articles did not take up the position of either asserting or defending the infallibility of every statement whatsoever contained in the canonical Scriptures. It is probable that all the most enlightened of them had more regard to the interests of the Bible than to take up the latter position, because they knew it to be one which could not be intelligently and honestly maintained. At any rate, both the articles quoted have one striking feature in common: they both studiously and carefully refrain from venturing to assert that the Scriptures are absolutely infallible as to every statement whatsoever, and as to all the matters dealt with by them, many of these being incidental to the main substance and objects of the Word of God.

It is of importance to note this at the present time. Among Protestant believers in the infalli-

[1] Articles of Religion, vi., Church of England.

bility of the Word of God, two classes of teachers are letting their voices be heard. On the one side, are those who advance beyond the limits laid down in the articles cited above, and contend for the entire infallibility of Scripture down to every sentence and word. And on the other side, are those who are satisfied that the safest, the truest, the most honest contention to make is, that the infallibility of Scripture does not necessarily extend beyond, and in reality, does not extend beyond the facts, the truths, the objects, the requirements, and the adaptations of the Divine revelation. It is those who hold this view that have the sanction and support of both the articles to which attention has been called. Those who hold the other view go further than either of the articles gives them express liberty to do.

The Unlimited Infallibility of the Bible.

Let us now go on to consider in what sense entire infallibility may be affirmed of the Bible. It need not be said that there is in existence nothing in the form of a creed, or of a system of theology, worthy to be accepted as an infallible interpretation of the Bible. Nor will any trans-

lation of the Bible be upheld as an infallible reproduction of every item and shade of meaning contained in the original Scriptures. Moreover, we have not sufficient ground for holding that the purest texts existing of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are infallible transcriptions of the sacred books, as they came from the pens of the inspired writers. Still entire infallibility may with truth be said to be an attribute of the Bible, even as it is possessed by us in our English versions. It is the record of an infallible revelation; and it is sufficient to lead any person, taught by the Spirit of Truth, to an adequate knowledge of this revelation. There is no error, nothing to mislead, in the teaching of the Bible regarding God and His mind and will, His purposes and ways. There is nothing fallible in the record of any fact in the Bible in which any item of revelation was communicated. There is in the Bible, for instance, an infallible record of the fact of Christ's death; and the Scriptural interpretation of this fact is approved as absolutely true by the intellect, the heart, and the conscience, when they have been sufficiently touched by its inspiration and brought under its power. And as it is with the fact of Christ's death, as explained in Scripture, so is it with the

Scriptural explanation of every fact recorded, in which the self-revealing God was present to make known His ways to men.

The Bible is a Book upon the fundamental relations of God as a Spiritual Being to the material universe. It deals with the fundamental relation of man as a spiritual being to God as his Creator, his Ruler, his Judge, his Father in heaven. It contains revelations bearing upon man's higher needs and his eternal destiny. Its ceaseless concern is about character, duty, responsibility, moral goodness, the happiness that springs from the right use of one's power of self-determination, and from harmony with the requirements of moral law, with the holy and immutable will of God. It is a Book of fundamental and eternal moral distinctions. It sets up an irreconcilable contrast between the righteous and the wicked; between holiness and sin; between obedience to the will of God and disobedience; between a life of lust and a life of faith and reason; between the love of the world and the love of the Father; between pride and humility; between selfishness and self-sacrifice; between the life in which temptation is yielded to and allowed to triumph, and the life in which temptation is resisted and overcome. The Bible

shows us how sin has separated between man and God, and how it introduces moral separations and antipathies between man and man. It shows us how deliverance from guilt may be obtained and sin abolished. It shows us the way back to God and to a life of happiness in His favour, in the bearing of His likeness, and in the doing of His will. And it teaches us all we require to know regarding the origin, the nature, the character, the history, the destiny, and the consummation of the kingdom of God. Or, to put the characteristic theme of the Bible in other words already quoted: "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture."

Such, then, are indications of that which constitutes the peculiar theme or message of the Bible; with respect to which alone it claims to be a light, a guide, an authority; and for which alone it holds itself responsible. And it is to the glory of the Word of God, that, as regards all such aspects of its message as have been presented in the analysis now given, its light shines fuller and brighter, page after page, onwards from

the dawn to the close of the revelation of which it is the record.

Here, then, is the right point of view from which to judge of the extent of the infallibility of Scripture. Its infallibility is entire as to its characteristic theme, as to its peculiar message, as to all it professes to be, and as to all it professes to do. Within this sphere it contains no error. Here it never misleads: never deceives; never goes wrong. Its infallibility extends to the whole counsel of God recorded in it. It never is found at fault in any of its facts, doctrines, promises, precepts, invitations, warnings, concerning salvation. All that it teaches about faith in God, in Christ, in truth, in righteousness, in moral love, in the wisdom of a life spent in the fear of God, has proved its absolute trustworthiness. And as trustworthy are its teachings as to where human life goes wrong; as to where the right way in all matters of conduct lies; as to how a life of righteousness may be attained; as to how manhood may be perfected in a life of likeness to God and of aptitude for well doing.

But to say, let it be further observed, that the infallibility of the Bible is entire in all these directions, is to say that Scripture possesses this

attribute up to the fullest extent of its requirements. If it is infallible in all these directions, then, there is no other direction in which infallibility is required by it. It does not require to be infallible, and God has not done what was necessary to render it infallible, in all its words and statements as to matters purely incidental, and with no trace of Divine revelation in them. Had the Bible dealt with matters of astronomy, geology, geography, secular history, genealogy, chronology, grammar, and such like, as its characteristic theme, and had it claimed to be infallible in all its utterances on such subjects, then it would have been just and reasonable to expect infallibility in its treatment of every one of them. But these and many other subjects touched upon in the Bible, are all less or more, and each of them in its own way, incidental to the Divine revelation. And there was neither cause nor occasion for the Bible, as the record of the revelation, to strive to be infallible in absolutely every one of its statements about any or all of them.

But this does not imply that the writers of the Bible were at liberty to be indifferent to accuracy of statement with respect to such matters, however incidental to their main mes-

sage some of them might be. And, as a matter of fact, no such indifference is apparent in the Bible. The writers of it evidently realised the value of such accuracy in no ordinary degree. And in the direction of such accuracy—of accuracy in secondary matters and incidental details —they seem upon the whole, and as compared with other writers of antiquity, to have achieved a wonderful success. Still in this direction absolute infallibility was not required by the characteristic interests and objects of the Bible. Moreover, the Bible was careful never to pretend to such infallibility. And in point of fact such infallibility was not secured. But the Word of God is infallible, entirely infallible, in regard to "the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life." That is to say, it is entirely infallible as far as its own peculiar characteristics, interests, and objects require it to be. And if infallibility to this extent has satisfied the Divine Author of the Bible, and is sufficient for His purposes as the self-revealing God, surely it might well satisfy all those to whom He has given His Word, in order that by searching the Scriptures they might find in them eternal life.

The Limited Infallibility of the Bible.

Now, however, we must turn to the other part of our subject, and consider more particularly the infallibility of the Bible on the side of its limitations. The Bible is partly fallible, while, as we have seen, it is wholly infallible.

The question of the infallibility of the Bible is met in three different ways. One theory goes to the extreme of denying its infallibility in every respect whatsoever. Another theory, already alluded to, goes to the opposite extreme, affirming it to be infallible in every respect whatsoever. Then there is the other theory, which keeps clear of both extremes; holding the Bible to be entirely infallible in respect of all its characteristic contents, features, interests, and objects, as the Word of God, as a Divine revelation recorded by men; while, at the same time, it admits its fallibility as to certain circumstantial and incidental details, the accuracy or inaccuracy of which in no way affects the truth and the infallibility of the revelation, or of the sections or elements of the revelation with which they happen to be connected.[1] The first of these

[1] This last is the theory held by men like Professor Marcus Dods and Professor Bruce.

theories we set aside here as incompatible with the form and extent of infallibility already attributed by us to the Bible. The second theory will be seen to be untenable when we have examined the merits of the remaining one, which takes the middle course. We shall find that here as elsewhere the whole truth about the Bible lies partly in one and partly in the other of two apparent contradictions.

Let it be remembered, then, that this theory asserts the entire infallibility of Scripture in the sense and to the extent above explained by us. It asserts the infallibility of Scripture in every sense in which it can be proved to be necessary, and to the furthest limit to which it can be shown to be necessary for it to go. And all that it does besides, is to say or to admit that fallibility has here and there, in matters of circumstantial and incidental detail, found a place where infallibility was not in the least required, and where, in consequence, it has not been secured. It is only to this latter part of the theory that we require now to direct attention.

The partial fallibility of Scripture as expressed in the foregoing words, is perfectly consistent with the terms of both the articles quoted in an earlier part of this chapter. The Westminster

Confession of Faith, from which one of these was taken, says as surprisingly little, in its chapter "Of the Holy Scriptures," on the infallibility of the Bible, as it says on its inspiration. But what it does say or suggest on the former subject, as on the latter, is said or suggested with extreme caution and wise reserve. The only clause in which the words "infallible truth" occur is as follows. After enumerating various forms of the evidence that shows the Bible to be the Word of God, it adds: "Yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and Divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our heart."[1] This is an important and suggestive statement. And its real significance favours not the theory of the universal and verbal infallibility of the Bible, but rather the theory we are now considering—the one which accepts the infallibility of Scripture with certain limitations.

The question arises, What is that which is said to be "The infallible truth" of Scripture, in the Confessional statement before us? The answer is contained in the statement itself. It is that truth with respect to which we may

[1] Section V.

have "full persuasion and assurance" as the result of "the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." Now this definition of truth does not extend to, and never could be meant by any intelligent theologian to extend to, every statement in the Bible; especially if in addition to his theological knowledge he had himself had experience of that kind of inward illumination and conviction, which springs from the teaching of the Divine Spirit and from His work in the heart. The statement in question is manifestly based upon a sound and enlightened distinction which requires to be drawn between two very different and large classes of statements contained in the Bible. On the one hand, the Bible from beginning to end is as full as it could be of statements in which, taking them upon the whole, are embodied all the truths of the Divine revelation recorded in it. And these are the truths, these alone can be the truths, to which the phrase "infallible truth" is strictly applicable. For it is only with respect to these truths that the Holy Spirit is promised to be our Teacher. It is only in and by means of these truths that His gracious work of enlightening, quickening, and renewing is begun and carried

on in us. It is only as regards these truths that He bears witness by and with the Word, producing in us full persuasion and assurance of their verity. Thus, for instance, in the Gospels, there are many statements about the miracles of healing performed by our Lord; and when we read and study those statements, in a true and teachable frame of mind, the Holy Spirit bears witness by and with the Word, fully persuading and assuring us of the truth of the Divine compassion as revealed in such mighty works. Again, the Gospels and the Epistles contain many statements as to the fact, and as to the significance of the fact, of our Lord's death, as a matter of revelation in which was manifested the holy and gracious love of God to the world; and when any or all of those statements, in which the revelation or any element of the revelation was embodied, are read and studied by the truth-loving and the truth-seeking disciple, the Holy Spirit does indeed bear witness by and with the Word, and inspires him with the living conviction that the truth contained in the statement is verily the infallible truth of God. And so in regard to every statement in the Bible, which is a record of any part or phase of the revealed mind, or will, or purpose of God.

But, on the other hand, the Bible from beginning to end, is also plentifully enriched with statements on matters of purely circumstantial detail and of purely incidental value. Everywhere these are mixed up with statements of the other sort. But as to their real character and importance they are totally different from them; and the difference lies here: that the purely circumstantial and incidental statements are not embodiments of the Divine revelation, whereas every one of the other kind of statements is a record of revealed truth. These purely circumstantial and incidental statements, then, are not covered by the definition of "the infallible truth" under examination. The relation of the Holy Spirit to the Christian disciple or to the seeker after truth, in connection with these statements, is not the same as His relation to the one or the other, in connection with statements in which actual Divine revelation is in some form or other recorded. The Holy Spirit, indeed, does not teach the truths of the Divine revelation and produce the full persuasion and assurance of their verity, independently of all the purely circumstantial and incidental details in the Bible record. But His special function as the Spirit of Truth, teaching and assuring

men of the truth, is not to bear witness to the truth of such details, but to the truths of the Divine revelation itself, as communicated in the facts, or the doctrines, or the precepts, &c., in connection with which such details are recorded in the Bible. It is not, for example, the special function of the Spirit of Truth inwardly to bear witness to us, whether Matthew or Luke was correct as to the order in which he related the occurrence of two of our Lord's temptations. Nor does the Spirit of Truth inwardly settle for us the question, whether the eyes of two blind men were opened at Jericho, or the eyes of only one man; or the question whether our Lord performed the miracle at one end of the city or at the other. It is not the special work of the Spirit of Truth, moreover, to assure us by means of inward testimony, which of the four Evangelists has most exactly reported the terms of the superscription that was attached to the Saviour's cross. And as little is it the special work of the Divine Spirit, to reveal to us in our hearts, whether there were twelve Apostles, or eleven, or only ten, present at that meeting on the evening of the resurrection, when the Risen Lord appeared in the midst of them. And, therefore, all such purely in-

cidental and circumstantial statements in the Bible, as have now been alluded to, are to be held as not included in any definition of the infallible truth of Scripture, when the definition expressly limits the truth defined to that order of statements alone, the truth embodied in which it is the special function of the Spirit of Truth to reveal in the heart, and verify to the judgment and conscience. Hence the definition of "the infallible truth" of the Bible, contained in the statement cited and examined by us, is on the side of those who hold that the infallibility of the Scriptures has certain limitations.

This view, moreover, is thoroughly Protestant. For while Protestantism denied the infallibility of every other authority save that of the Word of God, it did not take up the position of affirming the infallibility of every statement contained in those Scriptures which were accepted as canonical. What Protestantism had supreme regard to was the truths of the Divine revelation recorded in the Bible, and especially in the Scriptures of the New Testament. For the sake of these truths men like Luther were ready to die. And yet men like him never dreamed of proclaiming it as a truth about the Bible, that there is absolutely no infallibility or error in any of those

statements on purely circumstantial and incidental matters of which it contains so many.

But the question as to whether the infallibility of Scripture has indeed certain limitations, is a question regarding a matter of fact. It may be of importance to know what theory has the support of a Presbyterian Confession of Faith, and what theory has the support of Protestant views of the Bible. But what most concerns all those interested in the question, is to know what theory has the support of the actual facts involved in the inquiry.

There is one indisputable fact which the theory of limited infallibility has to uphold it—the fact, viz., that there is no such thing in existence as a Bible possessed of unlimited verbal infallibility. The nature and the amount of difference between the Scriptures of the Old Testament as they have come down to us in the Septuagint (in Greek) and the same Scriptures as they have been transmitted to us in the original Hebrew, are in themselves sufficient to convince any person that the Scriptures, as they were at first written, could not be the same as to every atom of matter contained in them, and the same word for word, as they are known to us. Besides,—not to dwell upon certain

forms of departure from the original text that befell first the Scriptures of the Old Testament and afterwards those of the New, while, during the earlier centuries of their existence, they were being transcribed and handed down from one generation to another,—there are those forms of fallibility which inevitably enter into every translation of the Bible from the original languages into another tongue. To this result from translations slight allusion has already been made. But here it is necessary to give special attention to it and to emphasise it. No translation of the Bible from the Hebrew of the Old Testament and from the Greek of the New, can preserve the attribute of literal infallibility, even supposing this attribute to have been possessed by the Scriptures as at first penned. This is a matter of fact quite beyond all dispute. "There is," says Baxter, "an impossibility that any translation should perfectly express the sense of the original." [1] Another testimony, and one still more noteworthy, to the same impossibility, was borne by the grandson of Jesus the Son of Sirach. Towards the close of the second century, B.C., the former translated the Book of Ecclesiasticus from Hebrew, in which it had been

[1] "Saint's Rest."

written by his grandfather, into Greek. And in the Prologue to the translation, he said to the readers :—" Let me entreat you to read it with favour and attention, and pardon us wherein we may seem to come short in some words, which we have laboured to interpret. For the same things uttered in Hebrew, and translated into another tongue, have not the same force in them, and not only these things, but the law itself, and the prophets, and the rest of the books, have no small difference, when they are spoken in their own language."

Such being the case, then, the idea of universal verbal infallibility, as belonging to any Bible not in the original Hebrew and Greek, is altogether out of the question. The truth is that it was beyond the range of possibility for this kind and extent of infallibility to be possessed and preserved by a Bible, which God intended to be the Bible for every people of the human race; the Bible translated into every language spoken under heaven, as it is in the present day rapidly becoming; and the Bible to be a lamp unto man's feet and a light unto his path onwards and onwards throughout all the ages of time.

Another important fact that points most distinctly in the direction of the limited infallibility

of the Bible appears in the limitations belonging to the inspiration of its writers. They were inspired for a special purpose ; and their inspiration was confined within limits co-extensive with the peculiar nature and special requirements of their task. They were not "infallible except for the special purpose for which they were employed. They were not imbued with plenary knowledge. As to all matters of science, philosophy, and history, they stood on the same level with their contemporaries—they were infallible only as teachers and when acting as the spokesmen of God. Their inspiration no more made them astronomers than it made them agriculturists." [1] And entirely to the same effect are the words of another writer—"The truth is, it is no concern of the Bible's to teach history or science or to correct all the erroneous impressions or popular fallacies which existed in the minds of those who contributed to the Scriptures. The information which its writers intended to convey to us, they were allowed to convey in the language of their own day. Their bad grammar and rudeness of style were not corrected, neither were their erroneous impressions regarding ordinary matters. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the

[1] "System. Theo.," vol i. 165. C. Hodge.

Holy Ghost, but this did not prevent their speaking with a provincial accent, neither did it prevent them from speaking in that whole region of thought in which their contemporaries moved."[1] Exactly so. Because all this was perfectly consistent with the special task for the accomplishment of which they received their inspiration. They were inspired to be teachers of Divine truth, to be spokesmen for God and writers for Him. And their special subject was to teach men—as it was revealed to them in various ways and at different times—the whole infallible truth of God, concerning the things which the Spirit of Truth teaches those to know, to believe, and to do, who love the Word of God and study it that they may live by it. But while they were thus inspired to teach the infallible truth of God on their own special subject, and with respect to which inspiration made them perfect experts, they were not inspired, nor did they require, in the interests of infallible truth, to be inspired, so as to be rendered infallible in all their statements on ordinary matters—matters bearing upon their special subject only in the most circumstantial and incidental manner.

To this conclusion we are led also by another

[1] "Revelation and Inspiration." Marcus Dods, D.D.

fact now remaining to be noted. It is a matter of indisputable fact that the phenomenon of unlimited verbal infallibility is not presented by the Bible. Here the reader must be referred to the contents of the foregoing chapters on Bible Discrepancies. As was proved there, and sufficiently illustrated, these discrepancies are perfectly compatible with an infallible revelation. But while this is true, they are nevertheless quite incapable of being reconciled with the fictitious and unnecessary theory of universal verbal infallibility.

Thus we have seen, then, that all the main facts involved in the inquiry of the present chapter lead to one conclusion — the conclusion, viz., that the infallibility of the Bible is limited in certain directions. But the Bible is never fallible where infallibility is required. No error has found a place within the sphere of the Divine revelation as it is recorded in the Scriptures. All the real characteristics of the revelation, all its true interests, all its essential truths, have been secured against inaccuracies and corruption. Moreover, in numberless scriptural statements on matters of purely circumstantial and incidental detail, there is no evidence of the presence of error. It was in statements on such matters

alone that it was possible for error to arise. And it is wonderful that among such statements the instances where error or discrepancy appears, are upon the whole so few and so trifling in their nature as they really are. To admit, however, that universal verbal infallibility has not been secured in regard to such statements, is not only perfectly harmless, but honest; and facts inherent in the Bible record require the admission to be made. And those who do make the admission, while at the same time they hold that the infallibility of Scripture extends to all the truths it teaches concerning God's glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, are not only thus far free from heresy; they are examples in matters of faith regarding the Word of God for all those who differ from them.

And this is the position which tends most to further the ends for which the God of revelation has given to us His Word. It is from this position alone that a true and reasonable answer can be given to those who, in their opposition to the existence of a special supernatural revelation, place the Bible upon the same level of fallibility in every respect as other books treating on kindred subjects.

Besides, their position, when held both intelli-

gently and believingly, implies a deeper spiritual relation to the Word of God than does that of those whose faith in Scripture rests upon its unlimited verbal infallibility. The faith of the latter is too much involved in the mere letter of the Word and too little imbued with its real spirit and its boundless life. The faith of the former has discovered where the true, Divine, infallible, eternal element of the Word lies; and in this it finds inspiration, liberty, enlargement. "I must tell you a truth," says Baxter, "which ignorant Christians fear to confess: the Scripture is like a man's body, where some parts are for the preservation of the rest: so the sense is the soul of Scripture, the letter is but the body."

THE END.

TURNBULL AND SPEARS, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Crown 8vo, price 2s.

THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES

And the Conclusions of Science.

Opinions of the Press.

"A thoughtful and stimulating discussion of a perplexed question."—*Scotsman.*

"Mr Thomson has made a deep study of the subject, and all inquirers into the 'Evidences' owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his labours. . . . The whole state of the question from first to last is here given fully, and we advise our readers to consult and study carefully this able and industrious work."—*Glasgow Herald.*

"A work of great care and of no small merit; and, considering the space at his disposal, the extent of the subject under discussion which is here embraced is astonishing."—*Scottish Leader.*

"A particularly seasonable volume. . . . Into a small space the author has packed a great amount of matter, and there is a vigorous, independent mind at work all through, vindicating the orthodox position not by the mere force of dogmatic assertion, but, on the contrary, by hard reasoning. . . . Thoughtful readers, and especially young men seeking to have a secure footing amid the contending currents of modern thought, will find good guidance in this handbook. It has the merit of being at once severely exact, and yet simple and popular in style, to say nothing of its extreme cheapness."—*N. B. Daily Mail.*

"Written by a scientific man on one of the great questions of the day, it is marked by calmness in argument, and does not evade any of the points that require to be met."—*Scottish Sabbath School Magazine.*

"The Committee have been fortunate in having an author who combines with marked thoughtfulness and scholarship the power of clear logical statement. Every page is full of careful reasoning and suggestive treatment, such as are fitted to make the book eminently useful far beyond the circle of Bible classes. It is indeed worthy of a place beside the best works on the subject, while it has the advantage of presenting the whole question within a comparatively short compass. . . . We commend the book to all who wish to understand the present-day aspects of the question of the miraculous, and would urge its careful perusal as a scholarly antidote to those flippant and unscholarly presentations of the subject which are only too often met with."—*Dumfries Herald.*

"Mr Thomson is master of his subject, and is a master of method. In the development of his theme he marches on with a sweep that includes everything that is necessary. The book is up to date in its

facts and conclusions. . . . The reasoning is close, fair, and conclusive. The volume is of the utmost value to young men who may be in doubt as to the position of Christianity in relation to science."—*Young Men's Christian Magazine.*

"Both well planned and well wrought out. It bears the stamp of patient investigation and thoroughly independent thought; . . . and the treatise is one which will render valuable assistance to young inquirers who are in danger of being misled by the confident assumptions of scientists who advance crude speculations as if they were demonstrated facts."—*Christian Leader.*

"A masterly treatment of the subject of miracles from the orthodox point of view. . . . A distinct advance on any former treatment of it as a branch of Christian Apologetics. It is as good a book as could have been written from the author's point of view, and there is no manual at all to compare with it for the purpose for which it is intended."—*Aberdeen Journal.*

"A broad, thorough, vigorous, and reverent study of its theme, and is a powerful and skilful defence of the genuineness and value of the miracle in Christian history. It is scientific in its methods and candid in its spirit. It is a helpful book, more so than most which discuss the same subject."—*Congregationalist, U.S.A.*

"This little volume has more real merit and is more really helpful than many large treatises. . . . An admirable little treatise, and one of the clearest and most sensible on the profound subjects on which it treats."—*Christian Advocate.*

". . . No one can fail to receive benefit from a study of this subject under his guidance, and in all probability those who are most familiar with the subject will receive greatest benefit. We have pleasure in recommending the book."—*Irish Congregational Magazine.*

"The tone of the whole volume is scrupulously fair, and special interest attaches to the closing chapters, in which Mr Thomson discusses with great ability and earnestness the doctrine of the Incarnation."—*Literary World.*

"The subject is most exhaustively and ably treated, and with great freshness. . . . A full and accurate knowledge of the most recent scientific investigation, and of the modern phases of scientific and philosophic thought reveals itself everywhere. The author has fully equipped himself for his task, and has applied to it a mind of keen, analytical, critical, and logical power."—*Original Secession Magazine.*

"Mr Thomson is evidently well read in the literature of his theme. He has mastered the works of modern unbelief against the miracles, but his volume is not a book of quotations. Indeed, one of its features is that it rarely quotes. It is a fresh independent study from the author's own point of view, presented in his own words."—*Dumfries Standard.*

"Mr Thomson seems to us to have rendered excellent Apologetic service in this carefully considered volume."—*Theological Review.*

"A clear and scholarly *resumé* of the chief objections to miracles, and how the arguments have been met."—*Literary Churchman.*